MORAL CHANGE AND THE GROWTH AND ESTABLISHMENT OF RESPECTABILITY: A study of cultural segregation within the London Labour Market with special reference to the writings of Francis Place and Henry Mayhew.

by

Richard Wainright B.A. (Exon)
Bedford College

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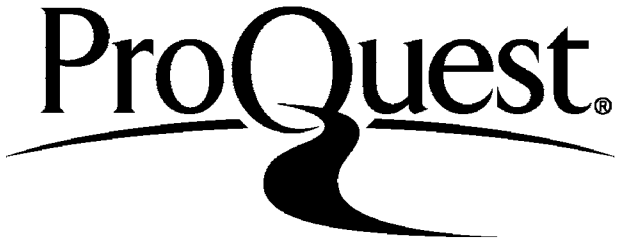

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ABSTRACT

MORAL CHANGE AND THE GROWTH AND ESTABLISHMENT OF RESPECTABILITY: A study of cultural segregation within the London Labour Market with special reference to the writings of Francis Place and Henry Mayhew.

Richard Wainwright

This thesis is focussed on the skilled artisan in London with the aim of explaining his apparent moral transformation in the period roughly from 1780 to 1850.

The first chapter establishes what is meant by a working class code of respectability by giving examples of the kind of behaviour and attitudes that are most appropriate to it. This assesses some of the available explorations for the type of character structure that has become identified with an industrial working class culture.

By referring to Place's evidence, the second chapter illustrates how the behaviour and values of the "average" artisons in the late eighteenth century were contextualised by a cultural milieu that was notorious for its turbulence and fatalism rather than restraint and rationalism. The aim is to show how this culture and its affirming values were dependent upon a social fluency that disintegrated in the nineteenth century. There is an examination of some of the ways in which respectability can be seen as a moral reflection of this disintegration.

The third chapter focusses on how the Place evidence can demonstrate the interdependence of social and moral transformation. It shows how the changing life style of the artisan was confirmed in the moral prescriptions of the political organisations he approved and questions Place's implication that social segregation might be explained voluntaristically.

The fourth chapter is devoted to Mayhew's study of the London trades in depth and shows the power of market factors at work in the process of social segregation and how they bore upon the defensive nature of respectability.

In the fifth chapter a comparison is made of the evidence and ideas of Place and Mayhew drawing out the inter-relationships of the component dimensions of respectability, showing how they were related to social and economic change in London.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my Supervisor, Peter Razzell for his patient encouragement and warm hearted support of this study.

R.W.

INTRODUCTION

It is generally agreed that the reputation for retraint and decorum of the Victorian Englishman was gained as a result of changes that occurred in manners and morals roughly between 1780 and 1850 in the context of industrialisation. Harold Perkin has tersely summarised the moral effects of "take off into sustained growth", asserting that the English 'ceased to be one of the most brutal, rowdy, outspoken, riotous, cruel and boisterous nations in the world and became one of the most inhibited, polite, orderly, tenderminded, prudish and hypocritical.'[1] This sweeping transformation is to be explained, he has suggested, by the emergence into ideological supremacy of a bourgeois, puritan code of values that guaranteed the middle class as the effective ruling class, before its position as such was politically confirmed. Such was the power of this code of values, that by 1850 it constituted what amounted to a moral orthodoxy.

Perkin is referring to a change that was registered by the dominating presence of a moral vocabulary full of injunctions concerned with the auto-direction of self to morally approved ends. "Self-improvement", "self-help", "self-respect" are all attested to in the exhortation to impose upon oneself a "self-discipline". Broadly speaking, these injunctions refer to an assumed duty (often confused with responsibility) to control circumstances, minimise chance and confront the demoralising power of fatalism. They were applied in one form or another to every social type from the entreprenuer to the wage earner. As Perkin's sweeping reference suggests, this moral state of

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1. H.J. Perkin, The Origins of Modern English Society (1972) p.280

affairs was not restricted to the middle class, but affected attitudes and behaviour in all social classes.

There is no lapse into nostalgic visions of past golden ages involved in the recognition that the dominant characteristics of the eighteenth century belonged to a working and moral tempo which derived from a pre-industrial social order. They were present in the rituals of St. Monday, public festivals from Whitsum Fair to "Tyburn Fair", rough sports and the paraphernalia of the popular riot. The period of the Industrial Revolution was not the first time that these activities and proclivities were frowned upon by official authority or the more strictly moral emphasis of puritan disapproval. The Interregnum was notorious for its moral repressiveness. Officers were appointed to enforce laws against drunkeness and blasphemy. They were supposed to bring an end to stage plays, gambling dens and brothels and to reduce the number of ale houses. As we know, all of these thrived with tremendous vitality in the eighteenth century. There had been a Society for the Reformation of Manners just over a century before Wilberforce's Society for the Suppression of Vice.(2)

The Industrial Revolution had been preceded by a long and cumulative ideological preparation. It is the period in which the puritan onslaught against spontinaity becomes more effectively institutionalised. It is a turning point after which the expressive forms and rituals of pre-industrial English culture that had punctuated the relationship between work and play became progressively ridiculed, legislated against and undermined as evidence of depravity, or at least moral laxity, in a social reformation culminating in what is knowingly referred to as Victorianism. Pressure was exerted with

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2. D.W. Brailsford, Sport and Society: Elizabeth to Anne. (1969) p137

increasing effectiveness to secure the sublimation of energy, dissipated in "wasteful" pursuits to more "productive" goals. If the dominant characteristics of the "nation" by 1850 were, among other things, inhibition and orderliness, it is as well to remember that most people in the nation were working class. E.P. Thomson has warned of 'the extreme difficulty of generalising as to the moral tone and manners of working class communities during the Industrial Revolution,' but in appraising the changes that occurred between 1780 and 1830 he feels there is one generalisation we can be confident about:

> 'The "average" English working man became more disciplined, more subject to the productive tempo of "the clock", more reserved and methodical, less violent, less spontaneous.'(3)

The crucial change in the experience of work can be seen behind preoccupations with self-respect, self-reliance and self-discipline. They come to be affirmed within the new moral vocabulary as signs of "progress" and "improvement".

The term that best registers the moral emphasis of the change Thompson has referred to is that of "respectability". It was not just the middle class that was preoccupied with this social and moral state. Working class culture was no less affected by its ethos. By the middle of the nineteenth century it is quite evident that working class respectability would have suggested the presence of mutually related capacities for self-respect, self-reliance and self-restraint. Within working class communities the morally affirmative opinion of others was complementary to preoccupations with respectability on the part of the individual. The kind of transition that Perkin and Thompson

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3. E.P. Thompson. The Making of the English Working Class (1968) p.451

have described would have been impossible without such preoccupations, which were functional to industrial working demands. They were endorsed within and sustained by the working class.

By 1850 working class respectability was epitomised by the skilled artisan. He conceived of himself within the moral vocabulary of respectability and was conceived of as being respectable. Historically, the skilled artisan had occupied a position of superiority within the labour market, but the acknowledgement of this superiority referred mainly to status and skill. During the eighteenth century the "average" artisan was not generally distinguished for his reserve or restraint. He occupied a central position in a popular culture that was notorious for its turbulence. A change in the meaning of respectability has to be taken into account. In the social terminology of the eighteenth century respectability was understood in terms of degrees of wealth, prestige and property. To all intents and purposes it was largely devoid of any explicit moral connotation. By 1850 the skilled man's respectability referred not just to skill and earning power, but to moral superiority. He was seen to embody most completely the value of self-restraint, which had not been the case in the eighteenth century.

The popular culture of the eighteenth century was transformed at the same time as London's position as a manufacturing centre was changed and it grew larger and more crowded. By 1850, its social topography reflected a more rigid segregation of social classes. It was a segregation that also operated within the working class. Moral disassociation between "respectables" and "roughs" was an expression of the rigidifying of social relations. It would be difficult to see an increase in preoccupations with respectability without reference to the nineteenth century preoccupation with social apartheid.

In the work of Francis Place and Henry Mayhew the change in the moral bearing of the "average" artisan is seen in this context of a huge diminution in the fluency of social relationships, though they differ greatly in tone and stance; the one a convinced Utilitarian eager to affirm "improvement" at every opportunity; the other critical of conventional political economy and deeply pessimistic about the changes wrought by apparently chaotic market forces. Their work provides an opportunity to examine the phenomenon of respectability from very different perspectives and to compare the ways in which they thought about society, social change and the working class.

Working class respectability is often explained as a moral effect of the social and ideological constraints of industrial work discipline. It would be useful to examine some of its more overt symptoms in the context of communities which experienced the full pressure of puritan constraints through industrialisation, as a means of demonstrating the main dimensions of what is meant here by respectability. At the same time, this examination is a point of departure for showing how, in the different context of London, a similar kind of moral formation became a centre part of the skilled worker's cultural inheritance.

CHAPTER I.

There is no shortage of evidence to show that the moral ethos of respectability has pervaded many of the dominant values of a working class culture seen increasingly in the twentieth century as "traditional".(1) Richard Hoggart has recalled this culture at the point where he and his generation inherited it in the 1920s and 1930s. He focusses on some of the dominant values shared by working class people in Ancoats, Hunslet, Brightside, Attercliffe and Hull, heirs to the cultural legacy of Thompson's "average" English working man' and describes some of the main perspectives of respectability, starting from the position of "self respect":

> 'And the moment this idea of "self respect" and "self reliance" comes to mind it begins to flower into related ideas: into that of "respectability" first, which itself spreads outwards and upwards from some thin lipped forms through the pride of a skilled workman, to the integrity of those who have practically nothing, except a determination not to allow themselves to be dragged down by circumstances...It is at work in the hatred of "going on the parish", in the worry to keep up sick payments in the big insurances to avoid a parish burial, in thrift and the cult of cleanliness.'(2)

As he sees it, this concept owes less to bourgeois social aspirations, than to the experience from which it has emerged, thus 'cleanliness, thrift and self respect arise more from a concern not to drop down, not to succomb to the environment, than from an anxiety to go up.'(3) In this setting self reliance is interdependent with self respect and can be recognised in such a claim as: "Ah've worked 'ard all me life and ah owe no man anything." Threats to self reliance like debts would have to be warded off by rigid and disciplined family economies.

1.This term can obscure more than it reveals; it is taken here to describe a working class culture that developed in response to nineteenth century industrialisation. The three books that are briefly discussed in the following pages are examples of twentieth century studies that have been concerned, from different points of view, with some of the dominant values of this working class cultural tradition. They have been focussed on communities that were created in the nineteenth century.

Debts lasting more than a week would cause severe anxiety. Circumstances such as these guaranteed that temperance established more than an economic credibility. If drink got "hold" it promised moral as well as economic ruin. The temperance movement retained a considerable working class following up until the second world war.

Historically, the closeness of working class group contact has provided the social basis of kinship, community and neighbourhood identities for the rituals of mutual help and "neighbourliness". However, this has also provided the basis of several anxieties as a result of the opportunities for grundyism:

> 'Wondering what the neighbours will say is as common here as elsewhere, perhaps more common in its way.'(4)

Inward conviction of one's respectability has to be confirmed by the public acknowledgement of others who have internalised similar values. In a community where home centredness occupies a central place in its culture, the details of "keeping a good home" provide comfort for individual families and outward evidence of respectability for the neighbours.

> 'The half length curtains keep out most of what little light there is, but they establish your privancy: the window ledges and

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2. R.Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy (1965) ed. pp 78-79
When this study was published in 1957 it was taken as a significant departure from the kind of work that had taken poverty as its frame of reference. It was an attempt to recreate and evaluate what the author considered to be the most authentic features of working class culture.
3.R. Hoggart, op.cit. p 79

4. ibid. p 34-35

doorsteps scrubbed further establish that you are a "decent" family, that you believe in "bottoming" the house each week.'(5)

Robert Roberts has written more astringently of a working class experience in a Salford slum community at the turn of the century. He describes a wide range of preoccupations with respectability along with the tokens and manifestations of its existance. One of the most obvious criteria of respectability was "class". As Roberts makes clear, the terminology of class and status is simultaneously moral and social. It is a reminder of the thoroughness with which the notion of respectability had become moralised.

'Every family too, had a tacit ranking, and even individual members within it; neighbours would consider a daughter in one household as "dead common" while registering her sister as "refined", a word much in vogue. Class divisions were of the greatest consequence, though their implications remained unrealised: the many looked upon social and economic inequality as the law of nature. Division in our own society ranged from an elite at the peak, composed of the leading families, through recognised strata to a social base whose members one damned as the "lowest of the low", or simply "no class".(6)

Like Roberts, D.H. Lawrence had experienced this kind of anxiety with "class" and could register acutely how it was reflected in the special status reserved for "end houses".

'Moreover, she had an end house in one of the top blocks, and thus had only one neighbour; on the other side an extra strip of garden. And, having an end house, she enjoyed a kind of aristocracy among the other women of the "between" houses, because her rent was five shillings and sixpence instead of five shillings a week.' (7)

Despite close physical proximity in the same "community", social divisions with their concommitant moral tags were meticulously observed and acknowledged publicly. There was a familiar working class social hierarchy at the head of which were shopkeepers, publicans,

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5. ibid. p 34-35
6. R. Roberts, The Classic Slum (1973) p 17
7. D.H. Lawrence, Sons and Lovers (1965) ed. p 9

skilled tradesmen and artisans and at the bottom a flotsam and jetsom of 'bookies runners, idlers, part-time beggars and petty thieves, together with all those known to have been in prison...'(8) Between them stood the regularly employed semi-skilled and a variety of unskilled occupations trailing off into extremes of casuality. A sense of intrinsic value was attached to these social gradations.

Though an implitly moral notion of respectability was attached to the minutiae of social distinction, there was also a sense of an irreducible core of moral evaluation stripped of any necessary association with occupation and social position. It related to what Hoggart described as 'the integrity of those who have practically nothing, except a determination not to allow themselves to be dragged down by circumstances...' Roberts gives an example of this integrity and the esteem in which it was held.

> '"She was poor but she was honest" we sang first in praise, not derision. I remember neighbours speaking highly of an old drudge, "poor but honest", who had sought charring work with a flash publican new to the district. "I dunno", he told her, "but come tomorrer and fetch a character". She returned the next day. "Well yer brought it?" he asked. "No," she said "I got yours an' I won't be startin'!" (9)

Outbreaks of violence ensuing from the tensions created by physical and moral insecurity were common and such occasions 'demonstrated how deeply many manual workers and their wives were possessed with ideas about class; with some, involvement almost reached obsession.'(10) In a neighbourhood where 'manners and morals were arraigned before a mass public tribunal', drunkeness and violence were inevitable means of a temporary release from inhibitions formed and sustained by rigid moral constraint. Any such outbreak was quickly

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8. R. Roberts, op. cit. p 17
9. ibid. pp 19-20
10. ibid. p 24

referred to the 'tribunal' for the appropriate judgement. The spirit of grundyism seemed to be constantly at work in the assessment and reassessment of family standing. Roberts has indicated the kind of events that were certain to set off a round of moralising gossip.

> 'Drunkeness, rowing or fighting in the streets, except perhaps at weddings and funerals (when old scores were often paid off), Christmas or bank holidays could leave a stigma on a family already registered as "decent" for a long time afterwards. Another household for all its clean curtains and impeccable conduct, would remain uneasily aware that its rating had slumped since Grandma died in the workhouse or cousin Alf did time. Still another family would be scorned loudly for marrying off its daughter to some "low Mick from the Bog."' (11)

Social standing was precariously dependent on material circumstances that could change at any time. The majority of the community were not skilled, or regularly employed, but were dependent on unskilled and casual work. In this context the most meticulous attention was given to possessions, both one's own and other people's. However slight, they helped to allay anxiety of total deprivation which left one completely exposed to public comment and the workhouse. Possessions were the visible symbols of social standing, respectability and in the most dire circumstances, the only reassurance that one was not, physically and morally, reduced to nothing. Most possessions were domestic and the attention given them was attention given to "class". As such there was no room for frivolity, which is made clear by Roberts recalling the standards of decoration expected by the 'tribunal'.

> 'Window curtaining with us had high significance; the full drape if possible in lace, being a necessity for any family with pretensions to class. No one scorned the clean modest half curtain, but a newspaper across the panes showed all too clearly that still another household had been forced to hoist the grey flag of poverty. Doors were painted brown and roughly grained:

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11. ibid. p22

> any tenant daring to use a colour gaily different would have been damned as playing "baby-house", a serious indictment in a world where the activities of childhood and maturity were strictly separated.' (12)

The same seriousness was expected in matters of personal cleanliness. Being seen to be clean was an integral part of being clean.

> 'In a street of coloured flagstones the non-conforming house wife stood branded each week by the dirty gap before her premises.'(13)

Circumstances of persistent hardship and chronic insecurity contextualised a rigid and self-abnegating moral code, as quick as it was harsh to censure. It is perhaps not surprising that in this onslaught against self 'many gave up struggling. The suicide rate (among us) remained pretty high.'(14) Deprivation was not exclusively economic. Roberts shows how vulnerable people were to the judgements of others. The local population he described were aware of the need to preserve a self-image by conformity. In this respect their behaviour was inclined to be selfless. He suggests that the local suicide rate largely resulted from the individuals concerned being disabled from possessing any positive self estimation because of destitution on the one hand and their having internalised values with which they regarded themselves as worthless on the other.

The normative constraints of respectability were internalised early on in a child's life as a result of rigorous parental imposition. Enforced deference was the usual mechanism through which one was socialised into the required behavioural patterns. Though the middle class was relaxing from mid-Victorian standards of parental control by the turn of the century the change had not percolated through to the working class.

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12. ibid. p 33
13. ibid. p 37
14. ibid. p 29

> 'In the lower working class "manners" were imposed upon children with the firmest hand: adults recognised that if anything was to be got from "above" one should learn early to ask for it with a proper measure of himble politeness.' (15)

Both home and school contrived 'to ensure a permanent conformist behaviour' which was passed on or reacted against for the next generation.

> 'Caned in school for any fault, these children were often severely beaten again at home for having been punished at all. A certain joy died early in them. Broken in spirit, scurryingly obedient, bleak in personality, they would be slaves now of any one who cared to command them. Conformity had been bought at a price indeed. On maturity and marriage to perhaps a less inhibited partner some, in order to compensate for a bitter childhood, became over indulgent parents; others, admirers now of past disciplines, went on to damage the lives and personalities of their own children.' (16)

Asserting that the severest upbringings were usually to be experienced within the most respectable and conformist families, Roberts describes the contrast of the non-respectable, 'the scum' doomed to sloth, dishonesty and dirt, who were 'notorious for their impudence, their swagger and the bold unswerving eye before a grown up, sure sign of the unchastened.' (17) For these children there were other institutions to compensate for their parents failure in the required moral duty. Any slum neighbourhood could exhibit an array of petty offenders: mostly children of the errant and neglectful. Officially designated as delinquent, they were treated as such by repeated spells of imprisonment. Both the prison and the workhouse were extensions of the moral machinery for 'keeping the poor deferential before any kind of authority.'(18)

Roberts feels that a variously focussed view of working class neighbourhoods extended over a broad time range would show the deeply-rooted nature of the moral legacy he describes. He is certainly not

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15. ibid. p 44
16. ibid p 46
17. ibid p
18. ibid. p71 The whole of chapter 4 pp 59-74 is highly informative about the treatment of "offenders" and "paupers".

inclined to share Hoggart's praise of family unity, inferring that such an affirmation is the result of too limited an experience of the conditions described. As he sees it, it was the 'gulf between parents and children' that was typical and it made, he feels, 'a profound impression on the minds and social attitudes of millions of manual workers. To ignore its influence is to distort any picture of working class relationships in the first half of the twentieth century.

In a recent study of Blackburn, Jeremy Seabrook was concerned to show that the circumstances that produced and sustained the repressive moral inheritance recalled by Roberts have changed in the context of post 1945 affluence and the establishment of the welfare state. The individualist compulsions of an earlier period that defined and gave meaning to a harsh notion of "self-respect" and respectability are seen as being progressively undermined, with the result that anxiety and confusion are replacing a grimly felt coherence. Blackburn is viewed as a town dominated by its past, an industrial past with a known, if harsh, moral tradition. The removal, or dislocation of the "traditional" rigours of a working class existence in a nineteenth century mill town amounts to a dislocation of the supports to a whole system of values. It is perceived as a threat to order and stability; the values of a repressive past get re-expressed in anger and frustration.

> 'The Welfare State and do gooders, they're undermining the guts and morale of the people of this country. There's not enough self reliance today, there's too much help.'
> 'In the olden times when the poor had to go to the Poor Law, when they was in bad circumstances, you used to have to work it off you see.... Now there's method about that you know.' (20)

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19. ibid. p 50
20. J. Seabrook, City Close Up (1973) p 25

The cultural ethos of Blackburn was typical of dozens of mill towns that grew out of the Industrial Revolution. Its dominant values were transmitted through work and an authoritarian working class family, who unconsciously assisted the millowners by ensuring that children grew up to be compliant and reliable, or, as Thompson has it, 'reserved and methodical'. Children were adjusted at an early age to a severe discipline of unrewarding work, economic hardship and the knowledge that poverty would be the most likely result from the slightest shift in circumstances. It is hardly surprising that, as parents, they socialised their children to expect little or nothing beyond what their own unremitting efforts in the mill would bring them, as one of Seabrook's informants, a retired weaver illustrated in a recollection of his mother:

> 'She knew how bad it was for them, but she daren't show any sign of weakness to the family because she was absolutely dependent on what little money they was bringing in, and she used all her strength to make them stick at it, stick it out to the bitter end!' (21)

In the most obvious sense the process of mechanisation was crucially important in securing the subjection of the "average" working man to 'the productive tempo of the clock'. Factory production entailed a series of drastic changes in the experience of work that have been amply recorded. A brief discussion of the moral pressures exerted by the early factories can show how the values recalled by Hoggart, Roberts and Seabrook were directly imposed through work.

The moral power of the modern factory is implicit in Weber's definition of it.

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21. ibid. p 17

> 'The real distinguishing characteristic of the modern factory is in general, however, not the implements of work applied, but the concentration of ownership, of workplace, means of work, source of power and raw material in one and the same hand, that of the entrepreneur.'(22)

Since he controlled all factors of production, the factory entrepreneur became the most important human agent in the historical process of the rationalisation of production. Weber added that these conditions were only 'exceptionally met with before the eighteenth century.'(23) They were by no means completely representative of all factories in the first half of the nineteenth century. Many were organised by an elaborate system of sub-contractural relationships and remained so for some time after their inception. The following brief discussion is limited to factories that approximate more to Weber's criterion i.e. where the entrepreneur had overall control, or where he had appointed reliable and salaried managers. As the size of capital inputs increased in the course of the nineteenth century, these conditions became more representative of factory organisation.

As many of the early political economists affirmed, the factory was more than an exclusively economic organisation. It had a distinctive moral role, which it fulfilled by bringing the type of mechanistic control over human behaviour that was comparable with its domination over production. It provided the environment within which new disciplines might be most rigidly imposed and effectively learned. The 'productive tempo of "the clock"' was systematically accompanied by a moral machinery of constraints in the form of regulations and fines that were designed to ensure that the labour force ("the hands")

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22. M. Weber, General Economic History (1961) p 234
23. ibid.

would be compliant, regular, reliable and able to concentrate its undivided attention on the demands of mechanical work. Fines had been imposed under the putting out system, but they were necessarily confined to shoddy workmanship, since overall control of production was not concentrated in the hands of a single employer. The factory employer, by centralising his productive operations had great opportunities to impose a working discipline. It was important to him to have his workers internalise the moral values that were implicit in this discipline. In the Strutt's factory at Belper, the regulations were representative of the most efficiently organised factories during the nineteenth century and fines were imposed for such offences as:

'Being off drinking.'

'Off without leave at wakes.'

'Going off without leave with some Militia Men.'

'Frequently looking through the window.'

'Riding on each other's backs.'

'Neglecting work to talk to people'

'Telling lies.'(25)

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24. See S. Pollard, The Genesis of Modern Management (1968)
G.C. Allen, The Industrial Development of Birmingham and the Black Country, (1929) pp 151-172
A. Fox. Industrial Relations in Nineteenth Century Birmingham Oxford Economic Papers, 1955 Vol.7 No.I
Floor letting in Birmingham was as common in the 1850s as it had been in the towns of the North West in the first two decades of the nineteenth century.

25. Cited in R.S. Fitton and A.P. Wadsworth, The Strutts and the Arkwrights (1958) see pp 234-236

From the fines it is fairly easy to see that the early factory workers were predisposed to escape the unremitting routine of mechanised work. They were certainly assumed to be. More generally, factory work was assumed to be tedious from generation to generation by most employers, hence their zeal to control unmethodical impulses to self gratification by moralising against them. Weavers in modern Blackburn could recall the old regulations and fines. One of Seabrook's informants is reading a factory notice about a hundred years old:

> "Any person coming late shall be fined as follows: five minutes late, 2d; ten minutes 4d; fifteen minutes, 6d; and so on. Any person found leaving their work and talking with any other work people will be fined 2d for each offence. For every oath and insolent language 3d for the first offence and, if repeated they shall be dismissed. If two persons are found together in one necessary they shall be fined 3d. each, and if any man or boy go in the women's necessary they shall be instantly dismissed. The management would recommend that all their work-people wash themselves each morning, but they shall wash themselves at least twice a week, Monday and Thursday morning, and any person found not washed shall be fined 3d. for each offence. Any person willfully damaging this notice shall be instantly dismissed." (26)

The stiffness of this type of language, with its embarrassed acknowledgement of the "necessary" and suspicion of the delinquent malingerings that might have gone on there was, as Roberts has shown, symptomatic of the whole repressive ethos of respectability. It was evident in the various codes that were adopted in different social situations. 'Men had one language for the mine mill or factory, another for home and a third for social situations.' The language of moral regulation in the nineteenth century is notorious for its repetoire of cumbersome euphemisms intent upon neutralising, or arresting all bodily life, in which resided by association, spontaneity and dirt. It is perfectly clear that the moral tone of the employers

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26. J. Seabrook, op.cit. p 18

would have been completely familiar to the headmistress of a "Mixed Infants" school, who ordered Roberts to take a boy home "and inform his mother that he's made an error in his trousers!" (27)

The moral objectives of the employers cannot easily be extricated from the authoritarian style of social control by which they were achieved. Many factory workers would have shared, or at least witnessed, the "improving" experience of William Crawshay, one of the operatives in the Ashworth factory at Turton, who in 1843 put his mark to a declaration expressing:

> ".....deep conviction of and sorrow for the manner in which I have conducted and exposed myself during the past week- and hereby promise and solemnly declare that I wll abstain from, and pledge myself never to take any intoxicating drinks during the whole course of my natural life." (28)

The intention was to resocialise the operative by making him accept the image of himself imposed by the employer. Guilts leading to anxiety about "what the neighbours think" were to be counted among the psychological consequences. Cook-Taylor affirmed that these preoccupations were well established at Turton in the 1840s while on his Tour of the Manufacturing Districts:

> 'Public opinion had established stringent forms of moral police which superceded the necessity of any other.' (29)

Once employers' constraints were internalised they were re-expressed in the form of dominant neighbourhood values. Cook-Taylor's' moral police' and Roberts' 'moral tribunal' were no doubt much the same thing.

The early elementary and factory schools complemented mill discipline by their adoption of similar instrumental approaches in

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27. R. Roberts, op. cit. p 57
28. Cited Rhodes-Boyson, The Ashworth Cotton Enterprise (1970) p 95
29. W. Cook-Taylor, Tour of the Manufacturing Districts (1968) pp 32-33

an authoritarian context. Such schools were part of the well-organised employer's equipment for socialising children into roles and aspirations that were appropriate for conscientious operatives. It was felt to be a necessary training for an industrial proletariat; methods and assumptions being much the same at the end of the nineteenth century as they were at the beginning. In the early part of the century, the system usually attributed to Bell and Lancaster, was celebrated for its suitability in factory school education. Bell's ideas on the education of "the labouring classes" are a model of clarity. He had no intention "of elevating by an indiscriminate education the minds of those doomed to the drudgery of daily labour, above their condition and thereby rendering them discontented and unhappy in their lot."(30) Approved of by the anti-utilitarian Coleridge as 'this vast moral steam engine', Bell's system was also praised as 'the division of labour applied to intellectual purposes... The principle in schools and manufactories is the same.'(31)

E.P. Thompson has described how modern work discipline made a considerable impact on popular community enjoyments. As pre-industrial notions of work gave way to more explicitly clock timed disciplines, traditional habits of thought and activity were transformed. Technological change is thus seen as a fundamental component of cultural change.(32) This was particularly clear in the emergence of a more

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30. Quoted in H. Silver, The Concept of Popular Education (1965) p 45
31. Quoted in J.W. Adamson, English Education 1789-1902 (1930) p 24
For a more recent discussion of the aims and functions of early "elementary" education see Gillian Sutherland, Elementary Education in the Nineteenth Century, (1971) Historical Association
32. E.P. Thompson, Time Work and Industrial Work Discipline, Past and Present December 1967 No.38

formalised division between work and leisure. Leisure time was spent in relatively more restrained ways because it was contextualised by modern industrial working routines, a point that is made by Angus Reach, the correspondent for the manufacturing districts in the Morning Chronicle survey of Labour and the Poor. He noticed that great changes had taken place in Ashton where hunting had once been a favourite activity of the handloom weavers, who followed their own dogs on foot.

> 'The mill system has, however, utterly extirpated every vestige of the ancient sporting spirit. The regulation of hours and discipline preserved seem, by rendering any such escapades out of the question, to have obliterated anything like a desire for or any idea of them.'(33)

Holidays, the occasions of traditional games and rough sports with their ethos of boisterous community involvement and not infrequent brutality, were expressions of a culture that could not be accomodated within the normative constraints of clock-timed work. Where rough sports did survive they had a particularly clandestine aspect about them, not least because of their connection with drink.(34)

The efforts of "model" employers to project their organising power beyond work into leisure time were directly related to the task of adjusting working people to the demands of the "mill system." Their

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33. The Morning Chronicle, Letter VII from the Manufacturing Districts, November 8 1849 (Labour and the Poor). Also in P.E. Razzell and R.W. Wainwright, The Victorian Working Class (1973) p 185

34. B. Harrison, Religion and Recreation in Nineteenth Century England Past and Present, December 1967, No.38
This subject is more fully discussed in the author's Drink and the Victorians (1971)

remoralising role outside work can be seen in the ways they encouraged their workers to develop tastes for more sober, orderly and peaceable leisure activities. Outings into the countryside, "gipsy parties", the social gatherings of chapel and Sunday School counted among the occasions for "rational amusements" that were generally approved as antidotes to the more violent and palpably irrational amusements of the eighteenth century. Outings, for instance, were covered by a host of regulations that were no less severe than those referring directly to work. The regulations issued by Messrs. Hincks, Wells & Co., a Birmingham pen manufacturers, on the occasion of a "pleasure Trip" organised in the summer of 1850, provide a good example of the behaviour, tastes and moral bearing that was expected from "the hands" on such occasions. Each pleasure tripper was issued with a card giving him or her the programme for the day and a clear directive on how to behave.

> "Time of starting-Half-past six O'clock precisely; any one being later, will be left behind, and their money forfeited.
> "The Road - In getting out of the cars, to walk up the hills (on the road); you are requested not to mix with other parties, but to keep pace with your own conveyance.
> "The Park - In passing through the park the same order to be observed as in riding; to walk four abreast, and under no pretence to move out of line; any one seen injuring or destroying trees, hedges, or plants will be discharged.
> "Time of returning Home - Eight O'clock precisely. The same order must be observed in returning as in going. You are requested not to sing, or otherwise make a noise in passing through the streets; and it is hoped that the greatest order and propriety will be observed throughout the day.
> "Programme for Dancing - Triumph, Paine's Ist set, gallepade, Schottische, Circassian circle, Lancers, polka, Spanish dance, circular waltz."

Charles Mackay, another Morning Chronicle correspondent, observed approvingly that these regulations 'were drawn up by a committee of the employed and the employers, and were so strictly and cheerfully adhered

to, that neither in going nor returning, nor during the stay of the party on the hills, did there occur a single instance of disobedience to orders, or misbehaviour of any kind, or of drunkeness - a fact as highly creditable to the employers as to the work people.'(35)

A respectable working man was conceived of by his employer as being a conforming man. The transmission of values that emphasised sobriety, cleanliness, homecentred and "rational amusements" often took place within a structure of deferential and quasi-paternalistic social relations. In Manchester people in "middle ranks of life" often acted as teachers. In this role they could be watchful of working class morals, inculcate their own values and project themselves as examples of improvement worthy of imitation like 'Mr. William Morris, the principal partner in a very large cotton working establishment...who is one of the most respected citizens of Manchester and who is justly proud of having worked himself up "from the ranks", takes the deepest practical interest in Sunday School and temperance movements, and is a distinguished advocate of both causes.'(36)

The power to transmit his values on to his workers owed much to the employers' physical presence in the same town or village as them. William Ashworth, a model paternalist employer and member of the Manchester Statistical Society, calculated in 1849 that the majority of employers in Lancashire and Cheshire lived in close proximity to their mills and their workers. Out of 904 proprietors owning 550 mills, only 29 did not live in the same town as their workers. In Bolton only 2 out 55 employers owning 44 mills lived elsewhere.(37) This kind of

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35. Morning Chronicle, December 16. 1850, (Labour and the Poor) Birmingham Letter IX. Also Razzell and Wainwright, op.cit. p299.
36. Morning Chronicle, November 5th and 15th 1849, Labour and the Poor Manchester Letters VI and IX. Also Razzell and Wainwright, pp173-179
37. Rhodes-Boyson, op.cit. p 87.

proximity gave the employer rather unique opportunities to effect changes in leisure time activity. In South Wales William Crawshay personally supervised a brass band among his workers, while Strutt took his orchestra of Belper to the opera in London.(38)

This type of employer could extend the area of his control by providing houses and encouraging his workers into new consumption aspirations. Angus Reach noticed that the mill workers in Ashton were generally well housed due to the practice of the employers of building and letting cottages.(39) Cook-Taylor had eulogised the Ashworth's for this while on his "Tour" of 1842. He noted that larger houses were attributed with both status and moral value.(40) The Strutts, the Arkwrights and the Crawshays were all attentive to the housing of their workers. This type of industrial feudalism certainly fulfilled Weber's criterion of the all-controlling entrepreneur. The relative restraint of the factory population owed a great deal to this broadening of the employer's capacity for social control. This extension of control was at work as the better paid workers learned new consumer demands. N. McKendrick, in a study of the Wedgewood enterprise, has suggested that traditional customs, festivals and feasts were exchanged for better food, clothes and housing. In other words, adaptation to industrial working tempi was a pre-condition of rising living standards with which Wedgewood and employers like him got their work force to identify.(41)

The importance of non-conformity in giving religious sanction to puritan social disciplines hardly needs any special pleading. The chapel and the Sunday School occupied a central position in the life

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38. Fitton and Wadsworth, op cit p 258
    Razzel and Wainwright, op cit. pp 256-258
39. Razzell and Wainwright, p 185
40. W. Cook-Taylor, op.cit pp 29-30
41. N. McKendrick, Josiah Wedgewood and Factory Discipline
    Historical Journal Vol. IV 1961 pp 30-35.

of working class communities which sprang up around factories. Many employers provided chapels and Sunday Schools and expected attendance at both, though they were not the only force relating the working class to non-conformity. Working class exposure to non-conformity, particularly methodism, in the first half of the nineteenth century, arose out of a great need for group contact and a palpable sense of belonging. The socially democratic nature of non-conformity was a central feature in its attractiveness and it assured individuals of an identity in community life. Stella Davies has recalled the sense of solidarity that 'was extended from the family to the members of the chapel.' In the small price concessions and the co-operative spirit with which 'odd jobs' were done, there was a special willingness to:

> "Support those that are of the faith."(42)

The chapel provided an outlet for community activity as a Blackburn weaver informed Seabrook:

> "It was all built round the church. Young people, all their life were built around it. Christmas coffee and buns and an outing in the Summer was the highlights of their life."(43)

Thus generations of working class people were exposed through non-conformity to social disciplines which were allied to the moral perspectives of the mill in that they encouraged the characteristics of respectability defined by the employer.

Temperance had a related role in social and moral readjustment. Like non-conformity it provided a social identity. Many of the brass bands which attracted generations of working class people, particularly in the north of England and South Wales, sprang from the temperance

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42. Stella Davis, North Country Bred (1963) p 36
43. J. Seabrook, op. cit. p 23

movement, or from non-conformity. The establishment of these bands did not necessarily depend on the intervention of a Strutt or a Crawshay. In this respect temperance represented an independent working class effort to create the kind of leisure activity which allowed a legitimised outlet for "community spirit". It was this collective aspect of temperance which contributed to its impetus as a "movement". Stella Davies has testified to the enduring nature of guilts and anxieties inculcated by a temperance-directed moral training.

> 'All of three generations were subjected to the pressures of temperance propaganda and to this day I cannot go into licensed premises without a feeling that I ought not to be there.'(44)

Brian Harrison has emphasised the importance of the temperance movement in redirecting the main bearings of work and popular amusements, with its strong moral support of home, family and respectability. Drink had been integrally linked with the working tempo of a pre-industrial society which did not have a strict conception of a division between work and leisure. There had been and continued to be, though on a declining scale, a multitude of occasions when work and drink went together. Drink had marked the various stages of apprenticeship, it was associated with initiation rituals and the paraphernalia of "finings" and "footings" and it was essential to an outsider anxious to be accepted within the tight knit community of a craft.(45) In the countryside drink was associated particularly with the harvest. As work time became more precisely calculated and working rhythms required

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44. Stella Davis, op.cit. p 26

45. This is well illustrated in the demands that were made upon William Lovett for drink 'for being shown the manner of doing any particular kind of work, together with fines and shop scores, often amounted to seven or eight shillings a week out of my Guinea.'

    W. Lovett, Life and Struggles in Pursuit of Bread, Knowledge, and Freedom, (1920) I pp 31-32.

to conform to the clock, the moral desirability of temperance went hand in hand with need for a reliable machine minding labour force. Temperance is thus seen as constituting a cultural dividing line within the working class between 'non-conformists and secularists, radicals and traditionalists, autodidacts and illiterates, puritans and bon-viveurs.'(46)

By secularising the Christian attack on rough sports, largely because they were associated with drink, the temperance movement was an important influence in the development of home-centred respectability. Harrison mentions that by 'the 1850s no respectable Englishman entered an ordinary public house, and by the late 1830s the village inn, where all classes drank together, had become a nostalgic memory - even if it had ever been as widespead as its admirers imagined.'(47) In emphasising the desirability of domestic privacy and increasing domestic consumption, temperance reformers were providing an effective moral sanction of modern industrial disciplines. Their efforts also represent a meeting point with utilitarianism, the philosophical cum ideological base upon which Victorian society affirmed itself. Both perceived moral positives in the relation between increasing home-centredness and "rational amusements," between respectability and improvement. They were morally cast in the same mould.

The foregoing discussion has pointed mainly to the moral influences on the working class of experiences that were generated with particular intensity in factory areas during the Industrial Revolution. These experiences have an obvious connection with working class

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46. B. Harrison, Religion and Recreation. 1967

47. B. Harrison, op.cit. (1971) p 46

preoccupations with respectability described by Hoggart, Roberts and Seabrook. From their work it is possible to see the ways in which the normative standards imposed by factory employers had been internalised and re-expressed as dominant values. The correspondence between the employers' intentions and a dominant moral ethos of respectability, is on the face of it, very close. A self discipline was required, a discipline to prevent the individual from "lapsing" and in its effects it exacted a very high degree of conformity, leaving little room for any deviation. Reserve, method, self-reliance and moderation were regarded as cardinal virtues and their presence was evinced by such things as domestic possessions and personal cleanliness. As symbols of respectability they testified to the ability of an individual or a family to minimise chance, even though, as Roberts has said, the slightest circumstantial shift could change a person's "standing." Any lapse from the commonly accepted standards could potentially expose individuals and whole families to a suspicion at least, if not a charge, of moral decline. This state had its symbols in drunkeness, debt, the workhouse and prison. Whole generations were exposed to the experience of extreme guilt that arose from the pressure of this dominant morality and were thus sustained in their preoccupation with it. Guilts and anxieties were particularly strong in relation to debt and sexuality. By association both were connected with demoralisation; the one rooted in failure and the other in "dirt". This type of evaluation was projected on to the individual from the community and by the individual himself <u>against</u> himself. As a self discipline it had less to do with "self overcoming" than with self defeating.

Clearly the nineteenth century factory has provided an abundance of evidence on the social processes whereby a repressive moral code was imposed on and internalised by large sections of the working class. They were situated in environments within which an adjustment to the proletarian status of "the hands", through the normative constraints of respectability, was more actively and systematically encouraged than elsewhere. However, if the "average" working man was more subdued in 1830 than he had been fifty years or so before, he certainly didn't work in a factory, nor did he by 1850. The largest proportion of urban industrial workers were employed in small workshops of various kinds or in domestically situated occupations. During the first half of the nineteenth century these working situations, which were much more closely connected to the increasing production of consumer goods than large scale industry, multiplied rather than diminished. The mechanised and power industries by no means absorbed the majority of a rapidly expanding working population. The increase in the number of workshop and domestic situations complemented the growth of large scale organisations in the way that E.P. Thompson has suggested, as 'twin components of a single process.'(48)

London provides a very good example of an area where workshop and domestic production remained representative manufacturing units and where the relationship between work and respectability owed nothing to the direct moralising pressure of the factory. The main changes in London's industrial structure were horizontal rather than vertical in that there was an enormous expansion in the number of small concerns.

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48. E.P. Thompson, op.cit. (1968) p 288

In London, as in most towns, the skilled artisans embodied more than any other section of labour most of the characteristics of working class respectability. It was not simply derived from their skill and obvious economic superiority in the labour market, but from their moral bearing. By the 1850s the skilled man was conceived of as a model of sobriety and self-helping industriousness. To Francis Place the skilled and sober artisan symbolised and embodied the improving impulse of the age.

In London the skilled artisans and tradesmen had not always been known for these qualities. Even by the end of the eighteenth century they were represented as not at all reserved in their manners, attentive to their homes, clean in their appearance, fastidious in their morals, or indeed anything that would suggest that they were respectable in the nineteenth century sense of the term. Recalling his youth, Place referred to 'the ignorance, the immorality, the grossness, the obscenity, the drunkeness, the dirtiness, and the depravity of the middling and even a large portion of the better sort of tradesmen, the artisans, the journymen tradesmen of London in the days of my youth...'(49) Between Place's youth and the mid-nineteenth century the "average" artisan appeared to have experienced a moral transformation, which owed little to direct exposure to the kind of pressures that affected the working man in the factory areas.

Francis Place is a key witness to the conditions that helped to produce the respectable London artisan of the nineteenth century and his work throws a great deal of light on the emergence of more rigid

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49. B.M. Add. MSS. 35, 142 f38

norms governing respectable behaviour in the context of an environment that was rather different from the industrial north of England. He saw the self consciously respectable artisan as a symptom of general moral "improvement" that was observable in all social classes and emphasises two broad factors that he saw as having a most significant bearing on moral change.

Firstly, the development of a political consciousness that was responsive to the aspirations of the French Revolution was seen by him as having a major effect on customary ways of thinking and living. It was present in an increasingly felt need for self education and was at work in the formation of political societies and the transformation of many trade societies. It was evinced by the movement away from crowd-centred types of agitation into more sober types of organisation that attempted to build a practical base for "the rights of man." That is the significance that Place gave to the change in manner and direction of London radicalism after the 1790s. These organisations contained "sober men", concerned with improvement, education and political representation and they made virtues of sobriety and reasonableness as necessary constituents of organisational talent. Place's reflective concern with these organisations was with their role in creating a certain character type that contrasted sharply with the 'typical' tradesmen of his youth. He noted how the skilled artisan became more home-centred and sartorially fastidious, unlike the typical artisans of an earlier generation, who might be described as community-centred in social orientation and neglectful of their homes as well as of themselves. According to Place these developments resulted from the impact of trade societies and political societies motivated by

goals of political autonomy and intent on sharing in the cultural legacy of the "enlightenment". The change in moral tone, the moral prescriptions and restraints imposed on members and, equally important, by members upon themselves, were related as means in the achievement of economic and political goals. Place has suggested implicitly that the efforts made and the goals pursued by societies of such men helped to democratise the notion of respectability by moralising it.

The second factor singled out by Place is more general, but he considered it as having a particularly important bearing on artisan respectability. It is the phenomenon of increasing social segregation that affected social relations between and within classes. Whilst he admits that this process was already well advanced before he was born, it nevertheless acted as one of the most crucially important agents of moral change during his life-time. The London of his youth still produced many occasions when different social classes mixed together, such as the Easter and Whitsun fairs. From his descriptions of the changes in these occasions it is fairly easily seen that they are part of a socially transforming process of segregation which took away the physical and normative supports of the popular culture of his boyhood. Increasingly, the riotous predispositions that were normal then became identified with criminality. Place sees the artisan identity being defined more by the trade societies at the same time as the normative basis of eighteenth century popular London culture was being brought into disrepute and devitalised by a contraction in the range of social allegiance. Implicitly, social segregation is seen as an overall context within which increasing numbers of artisans are becoming morally re-orientated by membership of organisations which imposed more stringent moral disciplines. As a result, the artisan is seen

as being aware of his own separation from other groups, who can be readily dismissed as "roughs," because of a cultural superiority which Place viewed as coterminous with moral superiority.

In 1850 Mayhew described 'the transition' from the skilled to the unskilled as a movement into 'a new land among another race.'(50) A few years later Thomas Wright, a 'journyman engineer' spoke of how the artisan conceived of himself in relation to the unskilled.

> 'Between the artisan and the unskilled a gulf is fixed... The artisan creed with regard to the labourer is, that they are an inferior class, and that they should be kept in their place.'(51)

This view was familiar enough to Roberts outside London. He has recalled pubs in Salford 'where workers other than craftsmen would be frozen or flatly ordered out of those rooms in which journeymen forgathered.' (52)

When Mayhew embarked on his enormous study of London Labour the 'gulf' that separated the skilled from the unskilled, the respectable from the 'rough' amounted to a number of equivalences in the divisions between the regularly employed and the casual, between 'society' and non-society men and, as the respectable put it, between 'the honourable' and 'dishonourable'. He had insights that were more sociological than moral, seeing the presence or absence of respectability and its accompanying moral ethos as emerging from distinctive experiences of work. Challenging the orthodoxy of his day, he demonstrated that improvidence and demoralisation had more to do with the social determinants of poverty such as low wages and chronic casuality, than with a lack of will power and self-discipline. As he described it, sweated labour could be seen as being alienated (in the Marxist sense) from its own product and doomed to produce surplus value for the capitalist.

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50. Morning Chronicle, Metropolitan Letter XIX December 14 1849 (Labour and the Poor)
51. Thomas Wright, Our New Masters (1873 pp 5-6
52. R. Roberts, op. cit. p 19

He formulated this process in the now much-quoted equation that 'overwork makes for underpay and underpay makes for overwork' and as Thompson has added 'for less work all round.' This was the experience of what the skilled called 'dishonourable' labour, so called because it threatened, as several respectable artisans told Mayhew, to depress a trade. The "slop" sections of a trade were adaptations of old economic forms to new purposes. They involved intense competition in which one accepted low wages working for a "garret master" or low prices by being one. In either case one was threatened by a reduction of income in relation to workload.

Unlike Place, Mayhew did not make any explicit enquiry about respectability, but his work offers a very revealing dimension of it, focussed as it is on the causes and consequences of different working experiences. As will be seen, Mayhew largely confirms what Place has to say about the respectable bearing of the skilled, but for different reasons. In the development of a concept of working class respectability in London, both writers point to causal factors that have little to do with the processes described earlier in this chapter, whereby a rigid and authoritarian moral discipline was imposed.

CHAPTER II

The life of Francis Place spanned the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth - the period when the moral transformation of 'the English' was made decisive by industrialisation. He was one of the most energetically interested witnesses to the process and wrote voluminously about it, mainly in the context of London. Much of his writing followed from his belief that the changes he experienced and witnessed were evidence of "progress." In this sense he was both witness and representative of the improving impulse of his age. Some indication of his confident stance can be seen in a passage written in 1823, in which he draws a positive relationship between material and moral progress. It comes from his qutobiography, which he was persuaded to write by Bentham and James Mill as an example of what could be achieved through individual moral effort.

> 'The progress made in refinement of manners and morals seems to have gone simultaneously with the improvement in Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. Some say we have refined away all our simplicity and have become artificial, hypocritical and on the whole worse than we were half a century ago. This is a common belief, but it is a false one, we are much better people now than we were then, better instructed, more sincere and kind hearted, less gross and brutal, and have fewer of the concommitant vices of a less civilised state.' (1)

He collected and produced a vast array of evidence relating to changes in manners and morals, which he hoped might provide the basis of a massive history affirming the nineteenth century by an extensive demonstration of its emergence from a black past. Though he was concerned with social and moral change generally, he was particularly interested in describing the typical features of the popular London

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*1. British Museum, Add. MSS 32, 142 f35

culture of the eighteenth century, in which the artisans and tradesmen occupied such a central position. This was the culture he was born into and which he knew from the inside in his youth. He recalled it as epitomising 'the concommitant vices of a less civilised state.' The emergence of the sober and serious artisan that he sees as becoming more typical in the nineteenth century, is associated on the one hand with the disintegration of this culture and on the other with the moral influence of the Trade Societies. As a result of his ideological preoccupations much of Place's evidence has to be treated cautiously. It is often too impressionistic and general.(2) However, the accounts of the London environment of his youth, particularly in the autobiography, are strainght, matter-of-fact descriptions of events, customs and people of which he had personal experience. They are recollections of the social milieu that formed the moral bearing of "average" artisans and tradesmen.

There is something of a problem in terminology here. Place uses the terms tradesman and artisan quite freely and sometimes refers to artisan tradesmen. At other times he refers to journeymen tradesmen. It is never clear whether he means the distinctions to be important. As Dorothy George and E.P. Thompson have shown, the artisan world at the turn of the eighteenth century was highly inclusive.(3) At one end of the scale stood the master craftsman employers and the small shop-keepers of Westminster and the city, while at the other there were the petty tradesmen with a stall in places like Borough market.(4) The fact that they appear to be jumbled up together must be taken as a measure of the social fluidity between them. During Place's lifetime

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2. E.P. Thompson, op.cit. p.845
3. Dorothy George - London Life in the Eighteenth Century (1966) chapters 4 and 6. Thompson discusses this in his chapter on "Artisans and others." op. cit (1968)

the dividing lines between these groups became more rigidly defined and the social distance between them was increased. Mayhew found in 1850 that these differences added up to a culture conflict within the artisan world which was based on differences of working experience and life style. The term tradesman is fairly inclusive for Place, but when he refers to artisan tradesman he has in mind somebody who has completed an apprentiship. The same thing is meant by journeyman tradesman. As wage-earning tradesmen who have been apprenticed they are skilled workers. This is the emphasis that he uses when talking of the 1820s and 1830s onwards.

At the outset of the autobiography, Place draws attention to the childhood and adolescent experiences of tradesmen's and artisans' sons between the late eighteenth century and the 1820s.

> 'My boyhood was like that of most boys in my rank of life very different indeed from what it is now among boys of the same class...' (5)

What appeared as outrageous to the moral sensibilities of the 1820s, let alone the Victorian period, were more or less assumed as normal during Place's youth. A different set of values related to an equally different structure of expectations about behaviour. The high regard in which his father was held reflected these normative conditions to the full. Simon Place was:

> 'caseless of reputation excepting in some particulars in which he though he excelled. Drinking, Whoring, Gaming, Fishing and Fighting, he was well acquainted with the principal boxers of his day, Slack and Broughton were his companions. Some of these desires and propensities never left him, though most of them

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4. G. Rude: Hanoverian London 1714-1808 (1971) p 83
5. B.M. Add MSS 35, 142 f33

> became all but extinct with age.[6] His behaviour was regarded as quite acceptable and not 'abnoxious as it would be now.'[7]

He was highly respected for his reliability, but the standard of reliability had little connection with regularity or sober, self-helping reserve.

> 'That such a man should have been able to make his way in the world seems strange, that he should have brought himself to ruin and his family to the most perfect state of distress and yet recovered again and again appears to us sober people of the present day almost incredible.'[8]

Such wild fluctuations between calamity and good fortune were, as Place assumed, intolerable to the moral taste of the nineteenth century, but were more easily endorsable in an age where bastardised aristocratic values were expressed in extravagant gambling and ostentatious patronage of boxing. There seemed to be little cultural pressure to sublimate energy and redirect it in an orderly way towards socially legitimised, restrained ends. Place hints that some of the typical features of his cultural inheritance were changing before he came to them and this would appear to be evident in his father's venting of violence to prevent his children from becoming like him.[9] Place himself admits to being a violent youth, but appears to have sublimated his violence. It is of course a hypothetical question as to what extent he was representative in being violently directed away from violence.

One of the central characteristics of his youthful milieu was its social variety, the social variety of "the people." There was a wide range of social allegiance to the taverns and "clubs". Place gives some idea of this social range by citing his father's club, the House of Lords, which met in a room at The Three Herrings in Bell Yard,

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6. ibid. f48
7. ibid.
8. ibid. f45
9. ibid. f127
D.W. Brailsford, Sport and Society (1969), p 206

Holborn. It was frequented 'by the more disreputable sort of barristers, attornies and tradesmen of what were then called the better sort but no-one who wore a decent coat was excluded.'(10) Simon Place became a publican himself and hired out rooms to be used by clubs such as this. The people who used his parlour (a room reserved for "the better class of customer") 'were pricipally neighbours, and others who came from a short distance and were all of them men who had the means of living genteely and saving money had they been so disposed.'(11)

The hedonistic ethos of taverns and clubs confirmed an indifference to any "rational" and disciplined capacity for saving. Place mentions that there were many tradesmen who saved money and reinvested in small businesses (as he himself did) and were respectable in the nineteenth century sense, but they were a minority. The practice of rational accumulation was unusual. Money was used for immediate gratifications and the "average" tradesman was like Joe France to whom Place was first apprenticed. He was a leather breeches maker who 'had what was called a good business, and might have saved money, but to do so was not then the rule among common tradesmen.'(12) Another average example is offered in Mr. Cuthbertson, 'a Celebrated Mathmatical Instruments Maker.'

> 'He was clever in his business and might had he been a careful man been eminent, but he was a sot, one of them who diligently attended his business and got drunk and muddled at night, he was a member of all the clubs in my father's house.'(13)

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10. Quoted in D. George, op cit. p 264
11. B.M. Add MSS. 102
12. ibid. f 96
13. ibid.

Unlike the respectable artisons of the nineteenth century, Place was confident that 'he who was the best paid was the most dissolute.'(14) The disregard for saving, the preference for the public life and pleasures of the tavern, as opposed to the good sense and improving privacy of domestic comfort were implicitly symptomatic of:

> 'the ignorance, the immorality, the dirtyness and depravity of the middling and even a large portion of the better tradesmen, the artisans and the journymen - tradesmen of London in the days of my youth.'(15)

Ignorance and immorality, dirtiness and depravity were inter-related in his thinking, like the general indifference to saving, as dominant symptoms of an environment that not only lacked a consistent idea of self-respect, but seemed to have little or no idea of it at all. What appalled him about it was the general air of carelessness it fostered and the apparently dumb subservience to chance and calamity. He would no doubt have agreed with Sir John Simon's dictum on human wastage in the urban slums of the nineteenth century. '...that, except against wilful violence, human life is practically very little cared for by the low', and given it a more socially extensive application to the world of his youth.(16)

There seemed to be little relief from neglect or ignorance and hence from immorality and corruption. He instances the moral qualities of the magistracy in circumstances where there was no effective system of law enforcement, with the result that extravagant punishment was indiscriminately applied to a whole range of crimes from the most outrageous to the most petty. Referred to by Burke as "the scum of the earth," the magistracy was made up of 'carpenters, bricklayers and shoemakers, some of whom were notoriously men of such infamous characters, that they were unworthy of any employ whatsoever, and others

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14. Trade Clubs, Strikes, Wages. (Printed copy in Add. MSS. 27,834,f75)
15. B.M. Add. MSS. 35,142 f38
16. Quoted in O.R.McGregor, Social Research and Social Policy in the Nineteenth Century B.J.S. Vol. 8, 1957, from Edward Seaton ed., Public Health Reports by Sir John Simon, 1887, Vol.I pp 45-46

so ignorant they could scarcely write their names.'(17)

Place is constantly reiterating the part of ignorance in this cultural legacy of neglect, violence and drunkeness. He sees the artisan's "improvement", of which rational spending and greater attention to personal and domestic hygiene were symptoms, following from the benefits of self-education and exposure to the moral stimuli of the trade societies with their emphasis on education. When Mayhew interviewed the skilled tradesmen in 1849 and 1850, he found that they were generally articulate and literate. The preoccupation of the skilled with education in the first half of the nineteenth century forms one of the salient themes of their cultural history. They contrast strongly with 'the commonest master tradesmen' of Place's youth when 'none of them reasoned as many now (1823) do of the moral consideration likely to be promoted by a system of sound information to be obtained at school.'(18) This becomes particularly evident when Place mentions how an intelligent and highly literate journeyman would be and was regarded as a threat by a master tradesman:

> 'I can remember when to be able to read and to indulge in reading, would if known to a master tradesman, have been so serious an objection to a journeyman, he would scarcely have expected to have obtained employment. It was a serious objection to me, I knew too much, and had I continued in the condition of a journeyman, I should have felt the inconvenience very seriously.'(19)

Even when he ran his own tailoring establishment between 1810-1817, Place was constrained to keep his literary interests from his customers, but some found out and he recalls bitterly:

> 'Had these persons been told that I never read a book, that I was ignorant of everything but my business, that I sotted in a

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17. B.M. Add MSS.35,142, f70
18. ibid f100
19. ibid f 41

> Public house, they would not have made the least objection to me. I should have been a "fellow" beneath them, and they would have patronised me; - to accumulate books and to be supposed to know something of their contents, to seek for friends, too among literary and scientific men, was putting myself on an equality with themselves, if not indeed assuming a superiority, was an abominable offence in a tailor, if not a crime which deserved punishment had it been known to all my customers in the few years between 1810-1817 -'(20)

Place related his frequent embarassment on this account to the fact that his education was clearly at odds with established expectations in a society that was still morally governed by notions of tradition and deference. Interestingly, he identifies the ignorance, and by implication, the dissoluteness and hedonism of the eighteenth century artisan with tradition and deference. Given the boisterously irreverent moral tone of the eighteenth century artisan this might appear to be a strange idea. For Place, ignorance was determined by forced exclusion from an official culture wherein lay political power and influence. E.P. Thompson has remarked of this kind of preoccupation that 'the articulate consciousness of the self taught was above all a political consciousness.'(21) Place was attached to London Radicalism which was rational and secular. He shared many of its aspirations and was personally involved in the enormous efforts made to register resentment of the eighteenth century power structure in a politically affirmative way.

Place devotes what is probably the most impressive section of his autobiography to the "average" childhood and adolescent experience of the 'sons of tradesmen in respectable situations.' Before these boys became apprentices most of them went to a school of some kind. These schools are observed here, not just as general reflections of a violent culture, but as providing an appropriate institutional means of socialising children for participation in that culture. Place comments:

20.Add.MSS 35, 143 f133
21. E.P. Thompson, op cit (1968), p 781

'There is nothing like these schools now, they abounded at the time I am speaking of and the conduct of all was alike.'(22)

Of the curriculum, he says very little, It was limited, tedious and 'seldom exceeded Reading, Writing and Common Arithmatic, badly taught, to this however must be added the Lords Prayer and the catechism by rote everything else was omitted.'(23) The principal features of a schoolboy's life were fights, riots, trials of strength and violent tests of endurance. Place talks quite plainly and unsensationally about these. It was common for the boys to challenge each other to the number of strokes they could receive in school punishment without showing pain. Fights were not just organised inside schools, but between schools and rival gangs, such as the schoolboy sons of journeyman and other gangs in the area. These are the classic characteristics of a youth-centred sub-culture at the centre of which stood the apprentices. For tradesmen's sons, school was overshadowed by the apprenticeship occupying most of their adolescence. But when the boys left school to become apprentices they were well equipped to fulfil the pastime demands of their new status like Place and his friend who used to go 'to Temple Bar in the evening, set up a shouting and clear the pavement between that and Fleet Market of all the persons there. The boys all knew boxing; and if anyone resisted, one or two would fall upon him, and thrash him on the spot; nobody interfered...'(24) Dorothy George has shown that this sort of amusement was the heritage

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22. Add. MSS. 35,142 f80

23 ibid 100
There was little change in curriculum assumptions concerning the education of the working class throughout the nineteenth century as Gillian Sutherland has pointed out in: Elementary Education in the Nineteenth Century. (1971)

24. Report of the Select Committee on Education 1835 (VII) evidence of Francis Place p834.

of well-established tradition of apprentice violence, citing the example of the boys from St. Annes and St. Giles who used to fight armed with sticks for "a week or two before the holidays". As a result of one of these confrontations in 1722, one Elias Myer was found guilty of manslaughter for killing "the captain" of the boys from St. Giles.(25)

When the boys became apprentices, they participated more fully in the life and pleasures of the town. It is not surprising that as schoolboys they could not wait to get away. Place recalls of himself, that he found less personal freedom at school with its half days and 'many holidays than in apprenticeship working twelve hours a day, six days a week with three holidays. ('Strange as it may seem it is by no means uncommon, I have known many boys who thought as I did on the subject') It is even more strange that Place should find this strange, for schoolboy status has never been popular with working class lads. When they became apprentices the sons of tradesmen had freedom to come and go more or less as they pleased outside work:

> 'During the whole of my apprenticeship I was under no control so long as the work expected of me was done, I might go wherever I pleased and do as I liked and this was the case with many other apprentices.'(26)

It was considered to be a truism of the day that the disorderly nature of London tradesmen was established in apprenticeship. Colquhoun considered that apprenticeship was 'a bad and immoral education', because of the example established by the masters who spent most of their times in taverns.(27) Place gives many examples of masters drinking in the

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25. D. George op.cit., P272
26. Add. MSS. 35,142, f130
27. P. Calquhoun, A Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis (1806) p315

same pubs as the apprentices. Thus the adolescent sub-culture which claimed the allegiance of most apprentices was directly related to the style of life shared by most London tradesmen. Close group identifications were further enforced by the cramped conditions of places like Fleet Street and the Strand which were representative of the kind of areas lived in and frequented by "common tradesmen". Place shows how these youths had their own particular group standards and fashions. They have more in common with the coster lads, young criminals and delinquents interviewed by Mayhew in the 1850s than the sons of the sober self-helping artisans of that time.

> 'Boys up to fifteen or sixteen years of age and many 'till eighteen or twenty years wore their hair long and curled on their shoulders, this was the general custom, but they who aimed at being thought knaving had fashions of their own, they especially who wished to be thought Kiddies had the hair on the sides of their face rolled upon pieces of window lead about four inches long, they usually had three and sometimes one above the other the lowest receding the most.'(28)

The amusements of these youths were often as brutal as they were violent and offered plenty of opportunities for 'knaving' and 'black-guarding'. Place admits that many of these activities were coming to an end when he came to them, but they were still sufficiently in evidence for him to recall his own involvement in them. One of the most popular sports was bull hunting, a London variant of the rural bull running, which was traditionally associated with holidays and church festivals.(29) In the London version, a bull was detached from the drove at Smithfield and was chased, beaten and tormented until it was exhausted, then it was lead, or dragged to the slaughter house.

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28. Add. MSS f111
29. A.R. Wright, British Calender Customs 3 Vols. Vol.I Folklore Society pp 89 and 166.
1936-1940 W. Glaisher, cit. in D.W. Brailsford, op.cit. p204

Place himself used to be 'exceedingly delighted with this sport which (he) could only pursue on holidays.' Before nineteenth century surburban development the ducking ponds provided opportunities for 'duck hunting and badger baiting; they would throw a cet into the water, and set dogs at her; great cruelty was constantly practised, and the most abominable scenes used to take place.'(30) One of the most revealing features of this culture is the way in which violence and brutality were just the accepted characteristics of community-centred pleasures. Place also mentions that sports like bull hunting 'used to collect the greatest of blackguards, thieves and miscreants of all kinds together.'(31) The tradesmen and apprentices not only mixed in with criminals, but were also quite capable as thieves and pilferers themselves, 'thieving had not yet become a trade to be followed by those who lived by it as it has become now.'(32)

The clubs to which many of the apprentices belonged were well known for their criminal associations. This was certainly the case with the "cutter clubs" to which Place and his friends belonged. A Bow Street officer has recorded why these clubs were apparently so closely connected with petty crime:

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30. Report of the Select Committee on Education (1835) (VII), evidence of Francis Place p 837. Place also mentioned, as he did frequently, that 'the atrocities of low life at that time, were not, as now, confined to the worst paid and most ignorant of the populace'.
31. Add. MSS. f 127.
32 ibid. f 101
Place is not only asserting his conviction as to the relationship between social segregation and respectability; he also seems to be suggesting that the specialisation of crime can be seen as a reflection of the division of labour in society at large.

> '...it is customary for many apprentices to raise money to buy a cutter; with this cutter they go up the River, to Richmond or Kew, and they spend their two shillings or their crown piece, or perhaps half a guinea. Those who cannot buy a boat, they go up to Godfrey's and hire a boat at so much.... Forty or fifty of these boats go up in this way...of a Sunday. These young men cannot support this expense, and from that they commence thieves. It is this that hangs a number of young men; and so far it is the same as bull-baiting; for if, by chance, there should be a bull-baiting, they are sure to go it.'(33)

Place shares this opinion which was something of a common assumption at the time:

> 'Our club was no better than many others; most of the members robbed their masters or other persons to supply the means of their extravagance.'(34)

The Cock and Hen clubs, of which there were no less than fifteen 'between Blackfriars Bridge and Scotland Yard', were great favourites with the apprentices and their girl friends. Place describes a famous Cock and Hen at a pub in the Savoy:

> 'This club was held in a large long room the table being laid nearly the whole length of it. Upon one end of the table was a chair filled by a youth, upon the end another chair filled by a girl. The amusements were drinking - smoking - swearing and singing flash songs. The chairs were taken at 8p.m. and the boys and girls paired off by degrees 'till by 12 o'clock none remained.'(35)

This was an accepted social ritual; even master tradesmen could be 'seen smoking their pipes in the same room with their apprentices.' By the 1820s and 1830s another pattern had been established. These clubs became associated with the criminal and indigent which Mayhew confronted and Place mentions this development in a footnote:

> 'There are still in some parts of town Cock and Hen clubs, but these are in the lowest and most disreputable neighbourhoods and are attended by none but disreputable people mostly young thieves.'(36)

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33. Report on the Police of the Metropolis, 1816 (V) p 213
34. Add. MSS. 35, 142 f
35. ibid f140
36. ibid f141

The tradesmen's daughters were no less spirited than their brothers. They learned the same 'flash' songs, enjoyed 'blackguarding' and flirting 'along shore'. They were not yet encumbered by the prurient sexual morality which accompanied the nineteenth century definition of respectability.

> 'Want of chastity in the girls was common, and was scarcely a matter of reproach if in other respects they, as was generally the case, were decent in their general conduct.'(37)

What Place calls 'want of chastity' seems to have been integrally linked with culturally sanctioned patterns of courtship and marriage. While many of the boys turbulent and unruly fellows, were "fine men" to the prostitutes who walked Fleet Street, they also

> '.....had a sweetheart who was the daughter of some tradesman, some of these girls were handsome, well dressed and in their general conduct respectable. With these girls I and my companions were as familiar as we could be, each with his own sweetheart. These girls however turned out to be much better than the boys - in as much as in other respects they were not like them dissolute. I could name several of them now living long since married to young men who were as well acquainted with them before marriage as afterwards, and I never knew any of them who made a bad wife.'(38)

However, such practices disappeared along with the values that sanctioned them, with the result that:

> 'A tradesmans daughter who should now misconduct herself in any way would be abandoned by her companions, and probably by her parents, she would indeed be so debauched in mind before such a circumstance could take place.'(39)

The impossibility of reconciling openly acknowledged pre-marital sex with the norms of respectability inevitably entailed a moral shift which filtered into other and related areas of childhood and adolescent

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37. ibid f101
38. ibid f137
39. ibid f148

One of the distinctive features of the boys and girls whom Place knew was their lack of bother and embarrassment about sex. As a result of their socialisation and the cultural conditions in which that took place they were well equipped to handle their own early sexual encounters relatively easily. If actual sexual experience was easily available so also was vicarious knowledge as Place intimates:

> 'Conversation in these matters was much less reserved than it is now, books relating to the subject were much more within the reach of boys and girls than they are now, and I had little to learn on any part of the subject...'(40)

As an example of the comparative sexual ease of his youth, he cites the example of his school, where it was considered quite normal for girls to pass through the boys' room before they got to their own.(41) This itself was characteristic of the times. No decent tradesman would now send his daughters to any such school, and especially to a man who was a bachelor, who had only one woman servant and no female attendant for the girls.'

The great seasonal fairs were ritualised social occasions in which a large section of the community participated and they provided opportunities for the expression of boisterous adolescent energies. In a description of Hampstead Fair, Place reminds us that the images of childhood, involving both vigour and vulnerability, with which Wordsworth, Blake and, later, Dickens confronted the moral repressiveness of an industrialising society, stemmed from actual experience.(42)

> '...two or three hundred boys and girls started in rows from the hill, some falling for the fun of it, others because they could not help it, made a pell mell of the whole tumbling over one

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40. ibid f84
41. ibid f98
42. The theme of childhood creatively affirmed in the nineteenth century has been most fully developed in:
P. Coveney, The Image of Childhood (1967)

> another, scambling up again only to be tumbled over and over again, in all possible forms and positions from the middle to the bottom of the hill, whilst multitudes of spectators who stood on each side of the hill kept up an obstreperous roar of mirth. I recollected the disregard of decency in the girls and women, the courseness of the gaily dressed spectators as well as the runners and tumblers, I compared the tradesmens daughters of that time with those of the present time.'(43)

Despite his 'melancholy' in making the comparison, he 'fully appreciated the wonderful improvement in manners and morals which had taken place..' As a result of that improvement such activities were conspicuously absent from Greenwich Fair in 1837, for 'there was little of gaity no hilarity, no running balling and squalling as there used to be, no "kissing in the ring", no "thread my needle", no "drop handkerchief", no lively sports of any kind.'(44) Great changes had taken place at Millbank even earlier as he noticed on Easter Sunday 1825.

> 'Millbank the gay, and noisy Millbank, the place for Sunday evening mirth, and vulgarity, and drinking and smoking and obscenity is deserted. There was no company at the two remaining public houses near Vauxhall Bridge, none of the punch drinking and tea drinking of former times, no sprightly youths with "pipes stuck in their faces", no flashy lasses, no tradesmans daughters dressed up by their foolish mothers to go blackguarding with boys "along shore".'(45)

As a result of "improvement":

> 'The class of persons who used to be found at the waterside, and at the tea gardens on Sundays, now amuse themselves at home or walk in the parks in a much more rational and useful way than they were accustomed to do formerly, and this is the case also with the respectable journeyman tradesmen and their families.'(46)

It is impossible to see the moral transformation of the artisans or "journeymen tradesmen" without seeing it in the context of a separation between the respectable and non-respectable. Public retraint, an emphasis on privacy and domestic care and the shift in sexual mores are measures of the change in social relationships that were bound up

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43. Add. MSS. 35,144 f184
44. ibid f214
45. ibid f190
46. ibid f191

with the deterioration of the great fairs. Once they lost their socially various character, they became more completely identified with the "low" and more subject to the disapproving eye of a stricter magistracy eager 'to supress the amusements which have from time immemorial taken place... during the Easter and Whitsuntide holydays.'(47) At Greenwich Fair, Whitsum 1839, 'the company were upon the whole much more shabby and dirty, than they who used to frequent the park at holiday times. There were many exceptions but the great preponderance were very low lived persons.'(48) Place found the whole thing very much more restrained as a result.

> 'No ill temper was shown, no wrangling, nothing likely to produce ill blood, or quarrelling in any way.'

whereas:

> 'some forty or thirty years ago, probably later, the chances are that it would have become much more a Boxing than a Dancing Booth.'(49)

The impression of restraint was confirmed in 1840, once again at Greenwich.

> 'No intentional offence was given to anybody - no positive drunkeness - no actual indecency - no foul language -'(50)

It would appear that despite the attachment of the "low" to a pleasure principle that became progressively tantamount to moral deformity, they evidently did not possess the boisterous talent for disreputableness and vulgarity, so notoriously displayed by the eithteenth century crowd.

One of the distinguishing features of the London culture recalled by Place was the degree of solidarity among the crowd - a crowd that

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47. ibid f196. Place quotes from a newspaper cutting which is undated.
48. ibid f216
49. ibid f220
50. ibid f227

contained such occupational categories as master tradesmen, journeymen and the 'more dissolute barristers and attornies.' This was "the common people" sharing a common culture. This crowd, often dismissed as "the mob", shared standards and values which were palpable 'their own' - a situation which was helped by close social and residential contact. Two historians have viewed the eighteenth century popular riot in the normative context of the shared standards of the crowd, rather than as a symptom of spontaneous violence expressed from time to time by an ignorant and criminally inclined poor population.(51) Relatively few of the participants in the London riots of the eighteenth century were part of a criminal or slum population. Journeymen, apprentices, craftsmen and tradesmen were among those tried for their part in the Anti-Irish Riots of 1736 and they willingly gave their voices to the cry of "no popery" in the Gordon Riots of 1780.(52) The popular riot was an explosion of the often latent allegiances and aspirations of various social groups responding in concert as the crowd.

Though it was precipitated by different events, the riot was a close cultural relative of the public executions which brought everyone out into the streets. These great festivals of calamity, where condemned criminals were paraded before the crowd and celebrated for their courage and carelessness, or execrated for their meanness and villainy, were epitomised by Tyburn Fair. Like the seasonal fairs

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51. G. Rude, The London "Mob" of the Eighteenth Century, Historical Journal, Vol.2, 1959, pp 1-18
The Crowd in History (1964)
Paris and London in the Eighteenth Century (1970)
E.P. Thompson, The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century, Past and Present Vol.50. Feb.1971

52. G. Rude, Hanoverian London, pp 225-226

that its name parodies, it was a great occasion for the expression of collective sympathies and antipathies with the crowd at its blackest and liveliest, at its most boisterous and irreverent. It was the kind of occasion that was progressively prohibited in the light of a conjunction between political anxieties over riotous assemblies and moral concern to secrete all that was unseemly or unsightly, from bawdy songs and undiluted Shakespeare to bear-baiting and "hanging matches". Place was just old enough to have experienced Tyburn Fair.

> 'Within my recollection, a hanging day was to all intents and purposes a fair day. The streets from Newgate to Tyburn were thronged with people, and all of the windows of the houses were filled... Songs were sung and the ballads sold at the corner of all the streets all along Holborn, St. Giles and Oxford Street. These songs were either bawdy songs or songs commemorating the acts and deeds of highwaymen, and other thieves.' (53)

The songs and the culture that produced them knew nothing of the niceties and sentimentalities that typified the genteel image of "the folk". The popular songs of Place's youth had not yet been hamstrung by the magistracy, or subjected to the neutralising attentions of those "prudent" editors who emasculated such a large part of the English folk song tradition in rendering it fit for the drawing rooms of the genteel.(54) The changes that occurred in what was publicly permissible were symptomatic of the social changes that Place attempted to chronicle and which were at the root of an increasingly moralised notion of civilised behaviour. He was aware of this and recalled some of the songs that were openly performed in London as representative of a culture and a world where politeness and respectability were moral attributes to be jeered at rather than aspired to.

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53. Add. MSS. 27,826 f97
54. This briefly discussed in: James Reeves, The Idiom of the People (1962) pp 8-16.
A much fuller discussion of the pressures brought to bear to neutralise folk song traditions is to be found in: A.L.Lloyd, Folk Song in England (1967)

'It will seem incredible that such songs should be allowed but it was so. There is not one of them that I have not myself heard sung in the streets as well as at the Chair Clubs, Cock and Hen Clubs, and Free & Easy's... It must not be supposed that they were only sung in the places which I have mentioned, they were sung in all parts of the town. There were probably a hundred ballad singers then for one now.' (55)

The songs celebrated popular heroes, praised drinking, thieving, bawdiness, irreverence and were generally occasions for the affirmation of common values. They were sung all over London and 'even the most infamous were not objected to, Servant maids used to stop in the markets to hear them sung and used to purchase them.'(56) Place gives a good example of how these songs were centred in a popular response to events that affected the crowd, particularly when any sense of threat was involved. He says of the ballad "Jack Chance" that it was written after the execution of the Gordon Rioters in 1780 'and was sung about the streets with great applause.' He added that at the time of the Gordon Riots:

'Gangs of Ruffians with Iron Bars in their hands went from house to house demanding money, and no-one ventured to refuse giving'(57)

The ballad is one of the many songs recording the sympathies of the crowd, its irreverent moral tone and its gallows humour. The fifth verse is missing.

"On Newgate steps Jack Chance was found
And bred up near St. Giles Pound.
My story's true dirg it who can
By saucy leering Billingsgate Nan
Her bosom heaved with artful joy
When first she beheld the lovely boy
Thus home the prize she staight did bring
And they all allowed he was just the thing
Chorus - just the thing
just the thing
And they all allowed he was just the thing

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55. Add. MSS. 27,825 f144
56. ibid f145
57 ibid f146

At twelve years old as we are told
The youth was strong stout and bold
He learned to curse and swear and fight
And everything but read and write,
His daddle clean he'd slip between
In a crowd he'd rap a clout unseen
And what he got he home would bring
And they all allowed he was just the thing
etc.

But when he grew to man's estate
His mind did run upon something great
To pad the hoof he seem's to tramp
So he hired a (rrrad) and went on the scamp
To strut in the park it was all his pride
With a flaming whore stuck by his side
At clubs he all flash songs would sing
And they all allowed he was just the thing.
etc.

He stood the patter but thats no matter
He gammon'd the twelves and he worked on the water
Till a pardon he got from his gracious King
Then swaggering Jack he was just the thing.
etc.

With Blue Cockade proclaimed for war
With Bludgeon stout or Iron Bar
To head a mob he never would fail
At getting a Mass House or Burning a Gaol
But a victim he fell to his country's laws
And he died at last in religions cause
No popery made the blade to swing
And when tucked up he was just the thing."(57)
etc.

Many of the songs celebrating "low life" were sung by 'gentlemen' in the taverns and clubs as well as by the street singers. The ballad "Sandman Joe" was just such a song. It was regularly sung in a gentlemen's club held in the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand and is a bawdy celebration of low life recording the progress of Joe the sandman and a prostitute, 'his flash gal Sally', as they carouse around the most notorious parts of the town on a drunken spree. The climax of the song follows their arrival at St. Giles pound, where

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57. ibid f146

five times they 'drained the quartern pot.'

'Oh then they kissed and shook their fists
My dearest Joe I know you
As sound a dog as ever pissed
This night I'll doss with Joey
Then away with hearts content
To play the game you all know
While Gallows Joe he wag'd his arse
And roaring cried white sand ----o
Why here's your lilly-lilly-lilly-lilly
White sand - oh!' (58)

It was also sung on Saturday nights at the back of St. Clements Church in the Strand 'by two women who used to sham dying away as they concluded the song - amidst roars of appreciative laughter.'(59) Place also recalled the same couple singing a song about a man with a lecherous wife which 'described his being reduced by her to a skeleton.' He could only remember the last two lines of the song but they are enough to suggest how the irreverent tone of the crowd could be vigourously asserted against the proprieties of the genteel.

'And for which I'm sure she'll go to hell
For she makes me fuck her in church time.'(60)

These were not the cultural conditions appropriate to artisan respectability and it was for this reason that Place was compelled to assess the forces by which they were dismantled and redirected. He describes how, in the political context of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, crowd-centred activity received increasingly effective attention from both the government and the magistracy. The moral implications of this official assault were inexstricably bound up with its political motives. The songs in praise of thieves, bawdiness and drink were repressed. Street singers and entertainers were watched closely and were officially permitted to sing only "loyal

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58. ibid f154
59. ibid f147
60. ibid f145

songs". These were printed by the Association against Republicans and Levellers and any ballad singer found singing anything but loyal songs was promptly despatched to a magistrate. The loyal songs were shortly accompanied by Dibdens Sea Songs and the old blackguard songs in praise of low life were driven underground with the result that within a few years they were 'unknown to the youths of the rising generation, thus the taste for them subsided.' With the aid of institutions like the Society for the Suppression of Vice, both the government and the magistrates were able to advance the process whereby these songs and the culture from which they emerged, were identified explicitly with a criminal underworld. (It is no mere coincidence that the young criminals interviewed by Mayhew appeared to have much in common with the adolescent Place and his companions.) The moral constraints which made this possible appear to have been internalised quite quickly:

> 'I have no doubt at all that if ballad singers were now to be left at liberty by the police to sing these songs that the people in the streets would not permit the singing of them.' (60)

Though more effective control on the part of police and magistrates is seen as a powerful influence in restraining the opportunities for 'dissoluteness' and 'immorality', Place considered them together as only one of 'the good producing causes' of improvement. He constantly refers to the general relationship between a more rigid identification of the cultural ethos of his youth with a specifically criminal world and the collapse of its socially varied and popular basis. The discussion of his apprenticeship years shows how identification with the dominant values of that culture was rooted in the sense of mutual identification made possible in interpersonal relationships. This is evident in the way that master tradesmen could be seen drinking with them. It was evident in the common causes that brought different groups together

60. ibid f145

as the crowd in a riot. The artisan world, though including a variety of different statuses, was still fairly cohesive and not yet subject to critical breaks in mutual identification created by the segregating power of social distance. Increasing social segregation between groups who had hitherto either identified with each other, or at least had taken the opportunities for frequent contact, was seen and experienced as moral segregation.

Place implies that the relationship between the general process of improvement and a more complete segregation between the genteel and the low, the "respectables" and the "roughs" was attributable to moral causes. The increasing distance between the two groups is seen as a consequence of a growth in gentility and a taste for the rational matched by a corresponding decline in the hedonistic world of 'blackguarding'. He felt that such a change was made possible by a more general exposure to rational ideas, to education and the improving effects of material progress. The tradesmen and artisans were no exception, but seen rather as remarkable examples of this process, which was, he insisted, encouraged by the trade societies eager to transmit the benefits of education among their members. In this way he brought together his case for a general improvement in manners and morals and his more specific case concerning the sober, responsible and rational skilled workman, who was seen as possessing most of the attributes of working class respectability and was therefore most typical of it.

CHAPTER III

Place considered that the improvement in manners and morals that he so insistently asserted was rooted generally in the improving influences of the Industrial Revolution, amongst which were notably an improved standard of living, an increasing exposure of "the people" to serious political ideas and the provision of a system of minimal education.

> 'Some of the good producing causes are a better regulated police and a better description of police magistrates. The extension of cotton manufacture which has done all but wonders in respect to the cleanliness and healthiness of women. The rapid increase of wealth and its more general diffusion subsequent to the revolutionary wars with the North American colonies and their wonderful and increasing prosperity. The French Revolution which broke up many old absurd notions and tended to dissipate the pernicious reverence for men of title without regard to personal knowledge or personal worth. The stimulus it gave to serious thoughts on Government and the desire for information in every possible direction. The promotion of political societies which gave rise to reading clubs, the independant notions these encouraged and the consequent reformation of manners. The introduction of sunday schools, and the invaluable method of teaching employed by Joseph Lancaster, exquisitely adapted for the actually poor. The introduction of schools on the plan of Dr. Bell, and the miscalled National Schools, little as they teach. The desire which the general movement produced in all below the very rich to give their children a much better education than they themselves had received, and the consequent elevation all these matters have produced on the manners and morals of the whole community.' (1)

To Place these developments were favourable to the moral effort that was fundamental to 'improvement' and respectability. Seen as a result of effort, the term 'respectability' has become much more overtly moral than it was in the eighteenth century. By using it as a term of praise, Place intended it as an implicit revaluation of not only the eighteenth century use of the term, but of its whole approach to moral evaluation. The insistence on a moral conception of

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 35,142 f38

respectability where it is made a function of achievement is an insistence on democratising it, thus modifying its exclusive application to property and social position. Self-impelled moral effort wask regarded by him as the basis of freeing the individual from a state of affairs in which property alone denoted human value (and an environment which favoured such efforts was to be praised). Though he felt that there had been a 'decided improvement in the great mass of the people', it was the skilled who most completely epitomised a new kind of respectability in the context of trade societies and political societies which influenced the change in the moral bearing of 'the tradesmen, the artisans, the journeymen - tradesmen in London in the days of my youth'.

Place felt that the skilled worker developed many of the characteristics that he had disciplined himself to. In giving his own example he makes it fairly clear what was involved in improvement and respectability, presenting himself as the representative as well as the witness to the process he described.

> 'I may say that I have attained my position <u>solely</u> by my own exertions exempting the wholesome influence of one man's intellect upon another man's intellect.'(2)

Had he limited his energies exclusively to the accumulation of wealth he would have been, he says, 'a mere lover of money for its own sake, a mean contemptible sot, a cumudgeon, should in all probability have had a hateful family, narrow minded, pitiful and worthless, as are now but too many of those who are very much improved compared with what they would have been forty years ago.'(3) He added that he was determined to eshew chance and 'the tricks of a tradesman' in becoming successful.

> 'I left off everything which could in any way tend to impede my future progress in the world, or was in any way calculated to bring deserved reproach on me or was likely to compel me

2. ibid f33 3. ibid f34

> 'on a close review of my conduct to reproach myself with injustice towards anyone, or with having on any occasion acted meanly.' (4)

This evaluation of his life is not intended as a crude and limited homily on self-help, or a moral guide to methods of maximising self-advantage. It is rather an insistence that the conditions of self-improvement require individuals to minimise the chances of self-compromise. Place felt that he had fulfilled them, as did Bentham and Mill, who persuaded him to write the Autobiography. In his estimation of his family he thought that he was justified in his stance of moral exemplar.

> 'As it is I have reason to be satisfied with myself, my excellent wife, and all those of my children who have grown; they are well-informed, honest, candid and industrious.' (5)

The movement away from the moral context of his youth was for him a movement away from carelessness and callousness, wastefulness and ignorance. His emphasis on moral effort was intended as a contradiction to an environment in which hopeless dependance on chance combining with chronic vulnerability to calamity made inevitable a set of fatalistic attitudes to life and death that were common enough in the eighteenth century, but were identified more completely with "the low" by the 1820s. The Autobiography, with its recurring theme of moral improvement, is his attempt to put himself as fully as possible in the context of historical change. He regarded his own case as an example to be followed and never doubted the value of his morally propogandist stance, which, he felt:

> 'can scarcely fail of being useful it will prove how very inauspicious beginnings, by a little honesty, a little practical good sense, a due portion of self-respect, and continual exertion a great deal of what is most desirable may be accomplished.'(6)

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4. ibid
5. ibid f35
6. ibid

This could almost be Smiles, or indeed any other Victorian homilist, but Place considered that such admonitions to diligence and self-discipline essentially challenged eighteenth century standards, which openly affirmed carelessness and recklessness. His own father was 'careless of reputation' but nevertheless considered to be reliable. Respectability, as he makes clear, resides not only in individual effort, but in being seen to be respectable. There was no necessary hypocrisy in this position, as far as he was concerned, as long as the reputation was honestly earned through effort. Believing that the improvements of his day were favourable to such efforts, as well as produced by them, he considered that society was being changed in a way that would equalise opportunities. His utilitarian ideology, well developed by the 1820s, was calculated to affirm the market economy, which, given a free reign, would optimise the opportunities of competing producers to achieve success by their own efforts. This kind of voluntaristic approach is at the root of his thinking on social and moral change.

As already mentioned, this moralistic conception of respectability was essentially democratic and therefore possessed the potential of constituting a political challenge. Place's stance is simultaneously political and moral and he identified it with the trade and political societies he had worked with. Referring to the London Corresponding Society and similar societies that 'have been so much abused and vilified', he asserted:

> '...that they have furnished the means of much right thinking, much political information that they promoted an increase in moral conduct and assisted mainly in improving the great body of the people.' (7)

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7. Add. MSS. 35,143 f89

He described the prime movers and early members of the L.C.S., which he took as a model society, as 'the thinking part of the working people, as well as many who were better off in the world.'(8) Similar societies in other parts of the country were formed by the same kind of people and he saw them as being instrumental in making respectable sobriety a dominant moral hallmark of their membership, which consisted mainly of the skilled. He reflected on how this was managed in the context of the L.C.S.

> 'The moral effects of the Society were considerable. It induced men to read books, instead of wasting their time in the public houses, it taught them to respect themselves and to desire to educate their children. It elevated them in their own opinions. It taught them the great moral lessons 'to bear and forbear'. The discussions in the divisions, in the Sunday evening readings, and in the small debating meetings, opened to them views which they had never before taken. They were compelled by these discussions to find reasons for their opinions and to tolerate others. It gave a new stimulus to an immense number of men who had been put in too many instances incapable of any but the grossest pursuits, and seeking nothing beyond mere sensual enjoyments. It elevated them in society.'(9)

At this point it is necessary to sort out what Place meant when he referred to 'the great body of the people'. By 1880, the taste for reading, debating meetings and the paraphernalia of 'rational amusements' was evident among only a small section of the working class and it was overwhelmingly among the skilled. But he implied that the influence of societies like the L.C.S. transcended their immediate membership, because they established a standard that was available for imitation. On the other hand, he says that as a result of their beneficial influence, a separation had occurred between 'the informed' and 'the ignorant'. This contradiction is glaringly apparent in a passage taken from his Pamphlet on Drunkeness.

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8. ibid f9
9. ibid ff 93-94

> 'Such has been the happy result of the improvement of the working people in London, that a separation has taken place between those who are informed and those who remain in ignorance: they no longer associate in common as they formerly did; the instructed men are an example to the uninstructed; and as men are always to some extent influenced by the example of those immediately above them, so in this case even the meanest, the most ignorant and the most depraved, with some exceptions, are bettered by the example of the informed workman.'(10)

Part of the purpose of this kind of pamphlet was to show that any assumption that lazily lumped working people into a single group, like "the lower orders", was arbitrary and misleading. He was at pains to point out that important differences in moral orientation and life-style were being ignored by such generalisations. By 1830, 'the most skilled and best paid (were), as classes, more sober and more moral and better informed' than either they, or their employers had been in the past.(11) He observed that 'the working man is frequently compelled to be idle, and this has a tendancy to make him dissolute.'(12) The chances of irregular employment were greater for the unskilled than the skilled and this estimation therefore had a more powerful application for them. His evocation of the working man's life points to the pressures that encouraged drunkeness and which were particularly present in the life of the unskilled:

> '... doing the same thing, generally in the same place, always against his will and on compulsion; without hope of bettering his condition, and in a majority of cases with a conviction that it will become worse and worse as he grows older and his family increases, his thoughts are necessarily of a gloomy cast, his house is seldom comfortable, for be his wife ever so well disposed and industrious, she with spirits broken cannot do those things for comfort which in former times she was wont to do.....'(13)

The particular relevance of this to the unskilled was emphasised in his following appraisal of the consequences of such a life:

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10. The Improvement of the Working People 1834 (London) p.10
    Add. MSS. 35,144
11. ibid p 6
12. ibid p 7
13. ibid p 8

> "Such is the state of many, and especially among uneducated workmen and labourers, to whom none but the more animal sensations are left, to these his enjoyments are limited and even these are frequently reduced to two - namely, sexual intercourse and drinking."(14)

Clearly the unskilled were neither 'elevated in society' nor 'in their own 'opinions' and certainly in no position to be able 'to desire to educate their children.' It would appear that the beneficial effects of societies like the L.C.S. did not reach them, let alone benefit them, even though they constituted numerically the largest part of 'the great body of the people.'

Place's account of the moral effects of these societies attempted to show how they were largely responsible for the moral reorientation of the skilled and how, as a result, a separation occurred between the 'ignorant' and the 'informed' who 'no longer associate in common as they formerly did;...' It was firmly fixed in his mind that beneficial effects followed from a positive response to an emphasis on voluntary moral effort that was akin to his own. This was probably shown most clearly in his citing of a dinner held at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand on November 5th 1822 to celebrate the anniversary of Thomas Hardy's famous acquittal in 1795. While he was there he met men who had been branch delegates to the General Committee of the L.C.S. when he was a branch chairman. Clearly they had been elevated in society.

> "The greetings were mutually agreeable, of these twenty four men, twenty at least of them were journeymen or shopmen when they were delegates to the General Committee of the Society, they were all now in business all flourishing men. Some of them were rich most of them had families of children to whom they had given, or were giving good educations. The Society had been to a very

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14. ibid.

> considerable extent the means, and in some of the cases the whole means of inducing them to desire to aquire knowledge the consequence of wh ch was their bringing up a race of men and women as superior in all respects to what they would otherwise have been as can well be conceived."(15)

For Place the L.C.S. and societies like it were the embodiment of a practical contradiction to the eighteenth century pattern. The business successes of some of his old L.C.S. colleagues epitomised the values and moral emphasis that he attributed to such societies. Their earnest encouragement of reading, learning, and rational debate followed, as Thompson has suggested, from a change in political consciousness. It was hoped that by sober and "useful" activity of this sort that a political education would be more widely available. As Place reported it, the influence of these societies amounted to a resocialisation of their membership. The change in moral bearing seemed to follow as an implicit result of a change in consciousness brought about by positive responses to rational ideas. He mentioned how the L.C.S. kept men out of public houses and reduced a compulsive relation between drink and leisure.

> 'Eating - drinking - & smoaking were forbidden either in a division or in a committee. No man in liquor was permitted in any division or committee and habitual drunkeness was sufficient cause for expulsion.'(16)

The emphasis on education, which was essentially self-education, would have required a great deal of private effort at home and would have brought the skilled man into a new relationship with his family. In this sense the efforts to achieve self improvement were related to a tendency towards greater sobriety and home-centredness. The typical artisans and tradesmen of Place's youth were largely inattentive to

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15. Add. MSS 35,143 ff94-95
16. Add. MSS 27,808 f10

their homes. He constantly referred to this and related it to a generally "irrational" style of life. By contrast the men who were responsive to the aims and influences of the political societies and morally regenerated trade societies espoused more rational attitudes which were manifested in their behaviour. They were seen by Place as increasing expenditure on domestic consumption while being more prepared to save money than in the past, when, in the context of a more community-centred existence, they had used it for immediate gratifications. Most of his father's customers were tradesmen of one kind or another who could 'have brought up their families respectably and placed them out in the world comfortably, but it was not the custom at that time to do so, and the result was inevitable ruin.'(17) An increasing capacity for sobriety and home-centredness became linked to rational economic behaviour and were thus seen as symptoms of the conjunction of education and moral effort that characterised this new type of respectability.

The effects of this reorientation were evident to Place among different generations of the same family who continued to live in the same house, area, or street. He gave an example of this type of transformation in a description of the changes that had occurred in Bell Yard Temple Bar where he was first apprenticed to the sottish leather breeches maker, Joe France. It was

> 'as perfect sample of second rate tradesmen's families as any place could be, and contained much that was low vulgar and dissolute. Bell Yard now contains many well doing respectable persons in much the same rank as when I lived there, but of characters as different as can well be conceived, some of them are the descendents of the families who lived in the same houses at the time. I am speaking of one of the boys having perhaps been steady or having given up his evil courses, established himself in

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17. Margaret Thale ed., The Autobiography of Francis Place (1972) pp 88-89

his father's business. I could name four such, men of property and character with respectably educated families.(18)

He felt that the example of Bell Yard had been repeated in many other areas of past notoriety. The change was such that people had to be reminded of the past before they could recall it, so completely had they internalised a set of values and expectations that sharply contrasted with those that were dominant in their youth.

'The truth is, that the same class of persons in the present day are so advanced in all that is decent, comfortable and respectable, as scarcely to be conceived of but by those who are old enough and observing enough to mark the contrast. I have frequently and very lately conversed with elderly people, now most respectably circumstanced, and having genteel families, whose improvement has been so gradual and long, that they themselves were scarcely conscious of it, and when I have led them back to the state of morals and the common conduct of those of their own rank in their boyish days, they have invariably ejaculated their surprise at the very great changes which have taken place without their having particularly noticed them as they went on and as they had not before been called to their recollection.'(19)

One of the most obvious manifestations of 'the very great changes that had taken place ' was the increasing attention given to personal hygiene and cleanliness that was facilitated by the easy availability of cotton clothing. In this, Place was a proponent of the idea that moral improvement and material improvement necessarily went together.

'The increasing cleanliness of the people is particularly striking and this is of itself a conclusive proof of their improvement. since I can remember, the wives and daughters of journeymen trandesmen and shopkeepers, either wore leather stays or what were called full boned stays, and these latter sort were worn by women of all ranks. These were never washed, altho worn day by day for years. The wives and grown daughters of tradesmen and gentlemen even wore petticoats of camblet, lined with dyed linen, stuffed with wool or horsehair and quilted these were worn day by day until they were rotten, and never were washed. A great change was produced by the improvements in the manufacture of cotton goods.'(20)

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18. Add.MSS 35,142 f93
19. ibid f93
20. Add.MSS. 27,827 ff50-51

If articles of women's underwear could be seen "standing alone with dirt" that was more than could be said for the lice to which children were the usual, but not exclusive hosts.

> 'The children of tradesmen and other persons keeping good houses in the Strand were all of them when I was a boy infected with vermin that is had lice in their hair, they used to be combed once a week with a small tooth comb, on to the bellows or into a sheet of paper in the lap of the mother, or some female of the family a great number, the largest number by far of the youth of both sexes had vermin in their hair, and many grown people were not free of them.'(21)

Improvements in this state of affairs were not just the automatic products of a changing standard of living marked by the greater availability of consumer goods, despite the complemetary role they obviously had in this process of change in standards of personal hygiene. Place identified his recollections of past standards with a whole society, but most particularly with London and the cultural milieu into which he was born. Changes in standards of hygiene seemed to be related to changes in the relationship between home and family, which was not necessarily a result of rising living standards, but rather a result of a change in values and expectations. In the eighteenth century the best paid were reported by Place as being 'the most dissolute'. There was no necessarily positive relationship between income and the amount of careful attention given to home and family. However, the increasing evidence of social segregation that Place constantly referred to went hand in hand with a greater emphasis on privacy and home-centredness. More money was spent on specifically domestic consuption. Changes in life style appear to have been generated by changes in social relationships. The tendency to be more concerned with hygiene became noticeable as home-centredness, and with it greater privacy, became more common in the lives of the "average" artisans and tradesmen.

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21. ibid f52

> 'Cleanliness in articles of dress was necessarily accompanied by cleanliness in other particulars, and this again by the desire to possess more conveniences, and better utensils, and thus again the houses of Tradesmen, and the rooms of working people came to be kept in better condition, to be better furnished, and in all respects neater than formerly. Part of the money formerly spent at the Alehouse was applied for these commendable purposes...'(22)

Home-centredness, no less than an increasing willingness and capacity for rational debate, had become a dominant characteristic of the artisan culture by the 1820s and Place saw it in relation to the beneficial effects he had claimed for the political societies and trade societies. The encouragements which they gave to their members to improve themselves would seem to have been reinforced within the home. Having identified with and internalised new moral disciplines, the artisan appears more and more to have re-expressed them in bringing up his children. The tone of earnestness that Place affirmed became more typical as a result of an early acquaintance with it by increasing numbers of children in the context of home and family.(23)

It would seem likely that a greater degree of home-centredness increased the amount of contact and therefore the number of opportunities for parental moral care. This was associated with a reduction in the amount of freedom given to participate in the amusements of the tavern, the chair clubs and cutter clubs which figured so centrally in the popular culture of the eighteenth century, where all amusements and contacts were sought and found outside the home and where the apprentice sons of tradesmen had plenty of opportunity for riot. An involvement in a new purpose with its accompanying seriousness changed what artisan parents were prepared to encourage and tolerate in their children. Nowhere is this clearer than in Place's observations about changes in sexual mores. He recalled that in the past tradesmen's

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22. ibidf51

daughters knew and sang the same bawdy songs as their fathers and brothers, both at home and in the taverns and chair clubs. This went together with a 'want of chastity' that was quite common.

> 'The songs which were ordinarily sung by their relatives and by the young men and women and the lewd plays and interludes they occasionally saw were all calculated to produce mischief in this direction. The whole of this is materially changed, the songs have disappeared and are altogether unknown to young girls.' (24)

Its worth recalling his comment, quoted in the previous chapter, that a tradesman's daughter would probably be 'abandoned by her companions and even her parents' if she behaved in the way that was accepted as 'normal' at the time of his youth. Children became more subject to an earnest puritan overview from their parents. What was occurring was a much more heavily defined conception of the separateness of children from an adult world that is so easily assumed in the phrase 'a Victorian childhood.'

As respectability was progressively linked to privacy and home-centredness so the public house became less and less socially various. Place was often polarising the home and the pub and drew attention to the importance of drink to pretty well the whole range of amusements and social occasions during the eighteenth century.

> 'Until today all amusements of the working people of the metropolis were immediately connected with drinking-chair clubs-chantry clubs-lottery clubs-, and every variety of club intended for amusement, were always held in public houses.' (25)

In discussing the increasing taste for privacy by the respectable, Brian Harrison has suggested that by the 1830s London tradesmen

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23. E.P. Thompson, op.cit., p817 has acknowledged this in stating that 'This artisan culture can be seen, also, as a leaven still at work in Victorian times, as the self-made men or the children of artisans of the Twenties contributed to the vigour and diversity of its intellectual life'.
24. Add.MSS. 35,142 f 101
25. Improvement of the Working People (1834) p 20.

preferred to drink at home rather than in the pubs. The increase in private drinking accompanied a process whereby amusements also became more private. As a result the pubs became progressively identified with "the low". Harrison has commented:

> 'But if the drink seller was losing his more respectable customers he retained, and with the decline of home brewing even extended, his lower class custom.'(26)

The rational, self-helping and self educated artisan is difficult to conceive of without his having broken, or modified, the customary connection with drink. Such a change was by no means simple. It involved extensive changes in the tone and manner of social relationships, as well as considerations of what type of company was to be kept and where it was to be kept. It was because drink was closely associated with a wide range of occasions and social relationships that it was not easily to be given up. To cut down, let alone to cut out drink, was to reduce the amount of contact outside the home and with it the social range of contact available. As Place constantly insisted, this would have been extremely unlikely, if not unthinkable in the world of his youth. Not only were all 'the amusements of the working people' connected with drinking, but so was a large part of work. Drink was a necessary constituent of working and business relationships in establishing good will and personal identity. The rituals of "footings and finings" enabled outsiders 'to gain acceptance exclusive crafts whose network formed a small community.'(26) Drink affirmed the various stages of apprenticeship in the form of initiation rituals. These were common experiences within the artisan world and helped to give unity to it. This kind of thing has to be

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26. Brian Harrison, Drink and the Victorians (1971) p 319

kept in mind in evaluating Place's recollection of master tradesmen 'smoking their pipes in the same room with their own apprentices.' Small workshops were the central foci of a social life in which there was great deal of mutual identification. There was very little sense of strict division between work time and leisure time. The social relationships of work were carried on outside work in much the same style. All sorts of meetings relating to work, including trade society meetings, were held in pubs and the dividing line between them and 'amusements' was by no means clear.(27) The emergence of the respectable and sober artisan would thus appear to have involved major changes in his working orientation if he developed a taste for "rational amusements".

Place's pamphlet on drunkeness was written in the context of middle and upper class prejudice that represented the working class as becoming more dissolute and drunken. It was a prejudice that reflected a growing demand that customary working routines should be brought into line with a more disciplined style. Industrialisation created a demand for compliant and reliable labour, as the factory entrepreneurs were demonstrating, and old habits, particularly drinking habits, were progressively regarded as evidence of moral degeneracy. As Harrison has pointed out:

> 'The frequency of early nineteenth century protest against working class drunkeness is as much an indication that the ancient inseparability of work and recreation had become inconvenient as that drunkeness had itself become more prevalent.'(28)

A greater formalisation of work time and leisure time can be seen as a crucially important factor in the increasing emphasis on and capacity for privacy that were recognisable marks of the respectable.

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27. ibid p 42 28. ibid p 40

'Industrialisation and an ideology of privacy and property, encouraged some sections of the population to brighten up the home in comparison with the drinking place.'(29)

Increasing home-centredness, a movement away from a dependence on pubs and heavy drinking and a modification in working routines are to be counted among the results of a change in the moral emphasis of artisan culture during Place's lifetime. Such changes owed little to any direct social connection with the kind of pressures brought to bear by the employers and managers in the textile areas. According to Place they owed much more to a change in political consciousness which aimed at the achievement of autonomy and the eschewing of deference. He repeatedly linked drunkeness, despite his considerable knowledge of its causes, symptomatically with ignorance, moral decrepitude, political apathy and deference. By contrast, the sober, rational and self-helping artisan, regarded as being progressively more typical, is politically aware, morally responsible, self-respecting and, as a result, not deferential. As already mentioned, he attributed these qualities to the moral influence of the trade and political societies with their emphasis on education and moral effort.

The aims of these societies were not always identical. Members of one society often belonged to other groups at the same time. William Lovett, a cabinet maker, one of the moving spirits of Chartism, was a member of the first London Co-operative Trading Association, the British Association for Promoting Co-operative Knowledge, the Metropolitan Political Union, the National Working Man's Association. He formed the last mentioned society with Henry Hetherington, a compositor and powerful spirit in the National Union of the Working

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29. ibid p 62

Classes, in June 1836. It was the product of a forward-looking radicalism, which had been pressing for reform ever since the days of Hardy and the L.C.S. Though its aims were to redress the verdict of the 1832 Reform Act, which had excluded the working class from the franchise, its rules made it quite clear, despite the connection of its founders with a National Union of the Working Classes, that a large section of the working population would also be excluded from its membership. They expressed the moral as well as the political objectives of the respectable and skilled artisan. The aims of the Association were:

> 'To elevate the moral, intellectual, and political character of the Working Classes; to afford them more opportunities for friendly intercourse with each other; and for forming a more substantial compact between them; and such men of learning, and political and moral integrity, as are desirous of making common cause with their less affluent brethren for placing happiness within the reach of all; - to soften and eventually to subdue, the asperity of the aristocracy and the middle classes towards the working portion of the people;- to prove to all their enemies the fitness of the working classes to manage their own affairs, both locally and nationally;- to maintain a combination of talented and virtuous men, devoted to the public welfare.'(30)

The tone is very similar to Place's in his assessment of the effects of the L.C.S. Earnestness and reasonableness combined with the sharper side of the radical response in defining the nature of the problems in hand - the impediments to political autonomy. The Association regarded itself as the spokesman of the working classes almost in the sense of 'productive classes' who were hamstrung by the "classes parasseuses", the non-productive classes. Its stance like many societies before it was a kind of English echo of the Saint-Simonian view of class relationships.(31) It considered that there would be no chance of autonomy:

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30. Add.MSS. 27,819 f194. This was a plan to establish a Working Man's Club at a General Meeting of the Metropolitan Radical Unions held on June 10 1836.

> 'so long as we continue to seek political salvation through the instrumentality of others, instead of our exertions, so long will party be triumphant, will corrupt legislation prevail, will private peculators and public plunderers flourish, and so long must we continue to be the mere supplicating cringing vassals of a proud arrogant speechmaking few, whose interest it is to keep us the mere toiling charity ridden set we are, the unhappy dupes of the idle and designing.'(32)

The Association left no doubt as to what kind of membership they called upon to redress this situation. There was to be no sense of "members unlimited".

> 'Let us, friends, seek to make the principles of democracy as respectable in practice as they are just in theory, by excluding the drunken and animal from our ranks; and in uniting in close compact with the honest, sober, moral and thinking portion of our brethren.'(33)

The passion with which drink was proscribed was directly related to political goals. Like Place himself, Lovett, Hetherington and the other signatories to these rules were not exclusively concerned with temperance reform, but with a rigorous insistence on the kind of behaviour and moral bearing that would advance individual and collective aspirations to reform and autonomy. There was no real distinction to be drawn between political and moral objectives in this question. Respectability was, as it were, a political necessity. The L.W.M.A. encouraged its members to attend to home and family in opposition to the pub in much the same way as other societies.

> 'In forming the Working Men's Association, we seek not a mere exhibition of numbers; unless, indeed, they possess the attributes and character of men; and little worthy of the name are those

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31. Asa Briggs, 'The Language of Class in Early Nineteenth Century England' in Essays in Labour History Vol.I ed. A. Briggs and J. Saville (1961) p.49
32. The Rotton House of Commons - being an Exposition of the present state of the Franchise. London Working Man's Association (1936) pp 3-4, in Add.MSS. 27,819 f 196
33. "Address and Rules of the Working Men's Association for Benefitting, Politically, Socially, and Morally, the Useful Classes." (1837) Add. MSS. 27,819 f221

> who have no aspirations beyond mere sensual enjoyments - who forgetful of their duties as fathers, husbands, and brothers, muddle their understandings and drown their intellect amid the drunken revelry of the pot house - whose profligacy makes them the ready tools and victims of corruption, or slaves of unprincipled governors, who connive at their folly, and smile while they forge for themselves the fetters of liberty by their love of drink.'(34)

The identification of 'the pot house' with the political ploys of a corrupt governing class recalls the passionate resentment of old Dissent denouncing "Satan's Strongholds". Its moral legacy was now inherited in a more secular context, but the style of its invective was still available and serviceable for defining political relationships from a powerfully admonitory stance. E.P. Thompson, in assessing the influences on Radicalism, had acknowledged its debt to old Dissent.

> 'Levity or hedonism was alien to the Radical or rationalist disposition as it was to the Methodist, and we are reminded how much the Jacobins and Deists owed the tradition of old Dissent.'(35)

All of the moral directives to be sober and restrained were invested with a political significance. It was recurring theme. Reading, rational amusements, the keeping of respectable company were complementary to the pursuit 'of our righteous object.' It was suggested that meetings should be held in each other's homes 'in the absence of means to find a better place of meeting' than the pub. Punctuality was encouraged 'as best contributing to our union and improvement.' Attention was called for in the moral instruction of wives and children, who should be invited to share the pleasures and concerns of the respectable working man; in appreciating his 'exertions' they would be 'inspired with (his) own feelings against the enemies of their country.'(36)

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34. ibid
35. E.P. Thompson, op. cit., p 816
36. Add. MSS. 27,819 f 221

Attendances at political society meetings were not overwhelmingly large, but there were several societies. Place calculated that the average attendence at meetings of the L.W.M.A. was about forty with the usual addition of about "six visitors". He noted that discussion was very orderly, as the meetings of the L.C.S. had been, and questions were submitted a week in advance so that 'everyone had time for reading thinking and enquiring.'(37) He might also have added that most of these sober activities would have been pursued at home in the context of family.

The kind of man that was required by the radical moral emphasis was as regular in his habits and tastes as any factory employer might have wished his ideal worker to be. Qualities of sobriety, responsibility and punctuality were not enforced by factory regulations, but in this case, imposed from within. Societies like the L.W.M.A. deliberately set out to create a moral elite that would influence by example. The insistence on exemplary behaviour was simultaneously moral and political. Among those societies and organisations that Place made responsible for the change in the artisan's moral orientation, great care was taken in achieving respectability through moral effort and in being seen to be respectable in the knowledge that the middle and upper classes were hostile, or at best dismissive. It is quite clear from their aims and the people they felt compelled to exclude, that they were anxious to disassociate themselves from any identification with "the mob", the world of taverns and hedonism, of calamity and neglect that had typified Place's youth, but which they

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37. ibid. f 206

now associated with the ignorant and "the low" - the unskilled and the casual. Place considered that those who were responsive to their moral example were in turn an example to the 'uninstructed', but he gave no indication of how this could be the case. Such an assertion leads straight back to the contradictory nature of his contention that there had been a general moral improvement among "the great body of the people", while at the same time claiming that the effects of improvement were to be seen in the increasing evidence of social separation between the respectable and the ignorant. It was a separation that he himself acknowledged, "within the working classes", between the skilled and the unskilled, and it had become more pronounced within his own lifetime.

> 'The most skilled and the most ordinary workmen were equally ignorant and dissolute...; and the most skilled and the best paid were, as they had the most means of being so, much more dissolute than the less skilled and worse paid workmen, whose means were less.
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> 'Now, the difference between skilled workmen and common labourers is as strongly marked as was the difference between the workman and his employer, and in many cases the difference is nearly as great and as well defined between the skillful and unskilful workman in the same business.'(38)

There does seem to be a convergence between the changes in moral orientation and life style of the skilled, and the moral emphasis of Radicalism in Place's lifetime. It is also clear that the increasing evidence of social segregation within the "working classes" appeared at the same time that the typical skilled worker became more respectable. Place described the demise of the popular culture of his youth in the context of increasing social segregation which was

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38. Improvement of the Working People p 6

caused by a progressive retreat by the respectable. It is here that the problem occurs of explaining by moral causes what is in fact a profound cultural change.

By regarding social segregation as a function of change in moral orientation, Place attributed a moral cause to the increasing evidence of social distance - a distance which was no doubt experienced, as it was observed, morally. It did not seem to occur to him to consider whether or not increasing social distance within the "working classes" could be attributable to other factors that were at work in changing social relationships generally. There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that the artisan's respectability, which became a model of working class respectability, can be seen as a measure of the impact of these other forces and a response to them. This moral change occurred in the context of a society in which a hardening of class relationships led to a restriction of contact between classes and even within them. Class relationships owed more to economic factors than to the voluntary actions of individuals. It therefore seems likely that opportunities for sympathy between socially distinct groups diminished because contact between them became less frequent. Indeed, much of Place's evidence shows quite clearly that there was a great deal of mutually sympathetic contact between socially various groups and that a diminution in sympathy resulted from a reduction or complete cessation of contact. This was not something that was restricted to the world of London's artisans and tradesmen. It was a complex manifestation of change in a whole social order.

The most obvious example of social distance is to be seen in the increasing residential separation that was concommitant with urban growth and expansion. Between 1750 and 1850, the social topography of London had been greatly changed, as the ways of observing it testify. In 1748, it was possible to describe London as a social medley.

> 'If we look into the Streets, what a Medley of Neighbourhood do we see! Here lives a personage of high Distinction, next Door a Butcher with his Stinking Shambles! A Tallow-chandler shall front my Lady's nice Venetian Window; and two or three brawny, naked curriers in their Pits shall face a fine Lady in her back Closet, and disturb her spiritual Thoughts.'(39)

This was an observation that would have made sense to Dr. Johnson and could be recalled, at least in part, by Place. He mentioned the road from Charing Cross to Parliament Street just after the turn of the century, in which bankers, tradesmen, prostitutes and soldiers lived next door or opposite each other. In 1849, Mayhew saw London differently. It was a reality that compelled description in terms of social pathology.

> 'Indeed, so well known are the localities of fever and disease, that London would almost admit of being mapped out pathologically, and divided into its districts and deadly cantons. We might lay our fingers on the ordnance map and say, here is the typhoid parish and there the ward of cholera; for truly as the West End rejoices in the title of Belgravia, so might the southern shores of the Thames be christened Pestilentia.' (40)

It was not that London had only recently developed its slum enclaves, its polite and notorious centres. John Stowe had remarked on this aspect of its existence before the end of the sixteenth century. But these features were now overwhelmingly evident. Mayhew's "districts

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39. Quoted G. Rude, Hanoverian London p 86
40. Morning Chronicle, September 24, 1849. For a brief comment on middle class journalistic concern over the situation reported by Mayhew see my Introduction to The Victorian Working Class (1973) pp xiii-xix

and deadly cantons" corresponded closely, as Chadwick has gruesomely demonstrated, to gradations of poverty in which longevity was related to the associated facts of environment and social class.(41) The factors which produced the kind of divisions that Mayhew could so confidently describe had transformed the cultural milieu of Place's youth. As a result, London became less of a "medley" and the frequency and variety of contact, upon which the popular culture of the eighteenth century depended, was minimised. By 1850, the vast slum enclaves which Mayhew had penetrated were well hidden from the view and the experience of the middle and upper classes, who resided either in the "fashionable end of town" or in the suburbs. H.J. Dyos has seen this as part of "the social cost" of industrialisation.

> 'Indeed, the wealth that was created in this process first benefited the middle classes who used it quite literally to put a distance between themselves and the workers.' (42)

But the middle class exodus to the suburbs did not receive its main impetus until the 1830s, by which time the impact of social segregation upon eighteenth century popular culture was decisive.

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41. Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain (1842)

CHAPTER IV

Unlike Place, Henry Mayhew was not directly concerned with moral change, "improvement" or even artisan respectability, but his work confirms many of the assertions that are central to Place' general view of the skilled worker's distinctive style of life, his behaviour, his values and his reluctance to identify with the general mass of the "labouring poor". His original intention in undertaking a social investigation of London Labour and the London Poor for the Morning Chronicle in 1849 was to 'consider the whole of the metropolitan poor under three separate phases, according as they will work, they can't work, and they won't work.'(1)

As the survey progressed he developed a deepening knowledge of and insight into the causes of poverty and insecurity. Using the London trades as his basic units of investigation he established the basis of an emergent sociology of poverty. In an analysis of his value as a social investigator Eileen Yeo had described his aims thus:

> 'He wished systematically to establish the conditions of employment, especially wage levels, in the metropolitan trades, relate these to the life style of the poor and at the same time, explore the industrial causes of low wages and poverty.' (2)

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1. Morning Chronicle, Labour and the Poor, Metropolitan Letter I, October 19, 1849. Gertrude Himmelfarb has criticised Mayhew for departing from this original and ambitious stance. As she sees it he concentrated too exclusively upon the poorest of the poor. She gives only a nodding acknowledgement of the value of the Morning Chronicle articles as providing 'some of the raw materials for a conspectus of the "Poor".
   G. Himmelfarb, 'The Culture of Poverty' in The Victorian City - Images and Reality, ed. J. Dyos and M. Wolf (1973) Vol.2, pp 709-710
   This kind of emphasis largely ignores the empirical dimension that Mayhew brought to an increasing polarisation within the labour market by his interviews with the respectable and well-paid skilled workers.
2. Eileen Yeo, in The Unknown Mayhew ed. E.P. Thompson and Eileen Yeo (1971) p 55. She points out that Mayhew considered the idea of using dietary criteria like Rowntree, who has been affirmed a more "scientific" investigator.

His stated 'vocation' was to 'collect facts and register opinions.'[3] It was this capacity to recognise the importance of what the "labouring poor" thought about their condition that made his interested in their evaluations of their own working experience, as well as the important and more measurable, though not always reliable facts about wages.[4] It certainly marks him off as a distinctive social investigator in the mid-nineteenth century when preoccupations with what was measurable often precluded the possibility of using important material that was subjective and therefore of doubtful value. His interests were akin to those of an anthropologist and enabled him to establish a sociological understanding of the differences in life styles and values between people as they stood in relation both to each other and to the means of production from which they derived their "life chances" and their own understanding of them. It was a method of investigation and a mode of perception that obviously relates him to Marx and allowed him to see the artisan in the context of his total working experience, which is itself seen to exist in the context of a labour market subject to changes wrought by progressive increases in production, competition and population.

His investigation of London Labour was made at a time when London's position as a manufacturing centre had declined in relation to other areas of the country and it is largely concerned with the effects of this process. The artisan world in which Place grew up had not been exposed to the full pressure of competition that was to come from provincial manufacturing centres, though, as Dorothy George has pointed out, intense competition and its concommitant

3. Labour and the Poor Metropolitan Letter II Oct. 23 1849
4. Mayhew sometimes informed his readers as to how he got his information. Letters VII, IX, X on Slopworkers and Needlewomen, Nov.9 16,20, 1849 provide good examples of this. Also available in Thompson and Yeo, op.cit. pp 127, 152-153.

array of sweat shops did not have its origin in the nineteenth century, but it had increased enormously by the time that Mayhew came to investigate the London trades.(5) What had changed substantially in the first half of the nineteenth century was the scale of competition both inside and outside London and this radically affected the status of many artisans, as E.P. Thompson has shown in writing of "Artisans and Others" in The Making of the English Working Class.(6)

Mayhew's work shows how the factors at work in changing London's position as a manufacturing centre were crucially important in the relationship between the skilled and the unskilled. They contributed to the boundaries that separated the respectable from the roughs and helped in hardening the moral ethos of respectability that guaranteed these boundaries. The social separation that accompanied respectability within the working class and was made manifest in greater degrees of privacy or home-centredness was observed to have been rooted in different experiences of work. It was work, rather than ideology, that was seen to create the conditions for a respectable skilled working class on the one hand and increasing numbers of the casual and the sweated on the other. In the one case there is a picture of families relatively well fed, sober and if not always well housed, able to contradict the demoralising pressures of the slums, and in the other case there is a picture of the constellation of grinding poverty, abysmal housing, and residual opportunity which confirmed the slums. Work had to be regular as a prerequisite of a share in the increasing domestic consumption so warmly approved by Place. As

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5. D. George, op.cit. (1966) pp 197-198
6. E.P. Thompson, op.cit. (1968) chapter 8.

Mayhew and many of his informants saw it, the amount and the quality of work available were both susceptible to the threat of competition - the competition of sweated labour and the market devices that multiplied it.

The increase in the supply of consumer goods that was made possible by the Industrial Revolution was no less dependent on a mass of outworkers, "garret masters", middlemen and a huge assortment of sweated trades than on the productive capacity of mechanisation. Vast inputs of labour made cheap by its abundant availability were used in sweated industries without involving employers in high fixed costs. They were an essential part of the process of industrial expansion, rather than exploitative excesses appropriate to an older, or more primitive economic order. This was the general context of Mayhew's work. His informants testified to the ways in which things had changed since the competition of the sweater had intensified and to how the methods used in squeezing out supluses were at variance with the established practices, values and expectations of the skilled. The sense of separateness felt by the skilled man from the unskilled exists in a much wider working context than Place dealt with. Place's view of the skilled man's political articulacy and radical undeferential demeanour was largely confirmed by Mayhew, but in the way that E.P. Thompson has indicated when he says that 'the artisan <u>felt</u> that his status and standard of living were under threat or were deteriorating between 1815 and 1840.'(7) The threat was the threat of the sweater, of unskilled and casual labour. It was the threat of diminishing opportunities for skilled work with established employers and vulnerability to the experience of casuality.

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7. ibid p 289

Though each trade undoubtedly possessed its own unique characteristics there were certain practices that had a general, though not necessarily equal application to all of those that Mayhew examined. With a self-appointed brief to scrutinise conditions of employment, wage levels and the determinants of both, he was quick to adopt an inclusive concept of competition as an organising insight for his work. As he saw it, it had ramifications throughout the whole of the labour market. Increasing competition was firstly the generating force behind the process in which wages were effectively being forced downwards in a progression of undercutting that seemed to be compelled by the expansion in the number of sweat shops that had appeared. In each trade a division between the "honourable" and "dishonourable" tradesman was discernable, with the result that the "regular" and skilled workman felt a sense of threat. This was particularly poignant in those trades where skills could be more easily diluted, substituted, or "scamped" as in tailoring, shoemaking, or some branches of carpentry, and these were the largest employers of labour that he investigated. An honourable master tailor in the city described to Mayhew the circumstances in which this sort of resentment had taken root in his own trade.

> "I have been in the business fifteen years. When I commenced I used to get good prices, but now I am compelled to give as good an article at a lower price - fully twenty per cent lower - in order to compete with ready made and cheap clothes shops. I have not in consequence reduced the wages of the men in my employ, so that my profits are considersably reduced, while my exertions, and those of other tradesmen similarly circumstanced, to keep together a 'connection', which may yield fair prices and a fair remuneration have to be more stenuous than ever. Year by year I have found the cheap establishments affect my business, and it seems to me that if the system pursued by the show and

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9. Metropolitan Letter XVII, December 14 1849

> slop houses be not checked it will swamp all the honourable trade, which becomes every year smaller. Customers bargain now more than ever as to price, their constant remark being, 'I can get it for so much at ----'s.' (9)

Despite the obvious suspicion that this statement has been tidied up a little by Mayhew to conform to the demands of Victorian prose reading tastes, the substance of it is clear enough and there is no reason to doubt that it could not have been presented without observation and interview. The master tailor went on to explain that "slop work" had formerly been confied to those who made clothes for slaves, soldiers and sailors.

> "When I began business the slop trade was a distinct thing from what is understood as the 'regular' trade of the tailor. Tailoring was then kept to itself. There were not half the good hands to be got then that there are now. A really first rate hand was comparatively scarce. Now I can get any number of first-rate hands, as I give full wages. I could get twenty such hands, if I wanted them in a few hours." (10)

According to sound political economy the cheapness of labour was without doubt determined by its oversupply. However Mayhew's informants saw the problem of oversupply as a function of the market conditions that were making their trades more competitive and thus forcing them to work comparatively more for the same wage with the result that more people were thrown out of work unless they were prepared to work more for less. The expansion of the sweated trade with its production of cheap clothes so often made up by 'women and girls' meant, said a "captain" of an established West End shop, that:

> "...the regular tailor is being destroyed; indeed even a man's own children are being brought into competition against himself, and the price of his labour reduced to theirs." (11)

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10. Metropolitan Letter XVI December II 1849
11. Metropolitan Letter XVIII December 18 1849. In the same letter Mayhew drew information from a "Report of the Operative Tailors in 1844" to the effect that in that year there were '676 men, women and children working under "sweaters", which were broken down into '179 men, 85 women, 45 boys, 78 girls and 256 children - the latter being members of the sweaters' 'family'. He was assured that the total had doubled and that the numbers of boys, girls and women had trebled since 1844. This referred only to the West End.

The fact that many of the "honourable" establishments were forced to make cheap garments or risk losing a large proportion of their custom inevitably advanced the hold of the sweat system. In this way the honourable trade felt itself threatened with a progressive impoverishment in terms of both living and working standards. As the numbers of honourable establishments declined more tailors were forced to work in cramped domestic conditions, though Mayhew was informed that a tailor working with his wife and children seldom earned what the honourable tailor could earn by himself. The exploitation of female and child labour imposed considerable hardship and also ran counter to the expectations and values of the regular tailor, as the "captain" from the West End shop made clear.

> "The workmen in our establishment are all, without any exception, honest, sober, industrious, moral men; the majority of them are married, and maintain their wives and families in decency and comfort. The workmen there employed may be taken as fair average of the condition, habits and priciples of the journeyman tailor before the puffing and sweating system became general." (12)

The skilled workers operating in the honourable section of a trade expected to "maintain their wives and families" and like this informant and some of his shopmates they expected to be householders. Unlike so many others, their earnings had not changed for "twenty years" and they did not have to work harder in order to maintain their living standards. Their work supported a life style that clearly separated them from the sweated but they nevertheless felt threatened.

There were other methods of competing other than pressing a wife and children into the service of sweated work. A common method of reducing costs was to use bastardised apprentice labour. The small master was enabled to pay low wages, which he was compelled to do in order to compete in the market, but this had the inevitable effect of a general reduction all the way round. The most notorious and

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12. Metropolitan Letter XVI

pervasive evidence of this was to be found in the East End, which was the centre for the sweated trades although they were not exclusively confined there. The system of employing boys increased in the West End, the centre of the honourable trades. A member of the City branch of the Society of Women's Shoemakers recorded that:

> "To such an extent has the system of employing boys increased in the trade that its a saying among the men now that its impossible to do without a boy to help. These boys are not apprentice boys, but taken on from ten to sixteen years of age, and instructed in the trade. Thus a sharp lad will be perfect in two years, and then his labour is brought into the market to reduce the man to the boys level..." (13)

It followed from this that not only would boys compete with men, but that boys byond the age of sixteen could only escape being employed by a sweater by becoming one. A Stepney bootmaker pointed out how this system was responsible for the over-population of his trade:

> ".... for these boys, as soon as they get out of their time, or upon their own hands, again employ more boys, adopting the system to which they have been brought up.." (14)

The more crowded a trade became the more competitive it also became and vice versa. If prices were being reduced for a given amount of work, more work would have to be done to get the same price or earn the same wage. Mayhew applied his own conceptual equation to this circular conspiracy of market forces whereby surplus value was squeezed out. 'Under pay makes overwork and over work makes under pay'. It was one of the chief organising insights of his work and was based on the accounts of his informants which he no doubt

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13. Metropolitan Letter XXXIV Feb II, I850

14. Ibid. Also the letters from Birmingham by Charles Mackay are revealing on this subject. See Labour and the Poor Birmingham Letters IV, VI, XII and XIV. Mayhew's subject was by no means limited to London.

refashioned slightly. The following observation on the effects of overwork and underpay from an honourable West End bootmaker is a representative example of this recurring theme and the circumstances that continually elicited this insight.

> "A workman being paid less for his work is obliged to do more, in order to get a living at his trade. Let us say that he does half as much again as he used to - then doesn't it stand to reason that there must be less work left for the others to do; and hence, on a reduction of wages, a number must be thrown out of employ." (15)

The creation of surplus value is seen by Mayhew as inevitably bringing about a reduction of wages because of the increasing amount of competition it causes in relation to diminishing opportunities. Once any kind of regulation is discarded, competition is seen as following on inevitably to 'overwork' with the result that once the wages of a trade are reduced, 'there appears to be no means of predicting to what point they shall ultimately descend.'(16) It is the type of perception that makes Mayhew an empirical relation of Marx. The threat posed by the sweated trades was the threat of proletarianisation, whereby the artisan slipped into a residual stratum of exploited labour having no control over its product. In this position it is alienated labour being used totally instrumentally and forced to conceive of itself as an instrument compelled to serve capitalist economic relationships which secure and perpetuate its reification. It was the sweatshop or garret, rather than the factory that was the focus of this process in Mayhew's work.

Mayhew compared the "garret master" or "chamber master" (there were hosts of different names for the same character depending on the trade) to peasant proprietors in agriculture, in that they

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15. Metropolitan Letter XVIII

16. ibid.

supplied their own capital and labour. In neither case was there much of a chance for capital accumulation, or any form of economic calculation beyond the boundaries of immediate and personal need. Both led a hand to mouth existence, but as he pointed out 'the garret master cannot, like the peasant proprietor, eat what he produces; the consequence is that he is obliged to convert each article into food immediately he manufactures it, no matter what the state of the market may be.'(17) Having no reserves, the garret master was inevitably forced to sell at the lowest price and was disastrously dependent on the very people in whose interests it was to pay the lowest prices and by so doing ensured that the artisan had to work longer the more dependent he became. As a result of the highly specialised division of labour, sweated and unprotected labour was often unable to do anything but a single task in the productive process, 'and that again makes him more dependent on the warehouses...'(18) It also had its effects on skilled labour as the glutting of the market with products of the slop sections of a trade forced the honourable part 'to resort to the same tricks as the rest.' The carpentering and building trades were particularly subject to these processes.(19)

Though some small masters set up for reasons of wanting to be independent, Mayhew considered that the majority did so because of the lack of regular work in the honourable establishments or low wages in the sweat shops. The slop trades also attracted those who were unable to find work in other and entirely different trades and thus expanded the ranks of residual and easily exploitable labour

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17. Metropolitan Letter LXV August 15, 1850
18. ibid.
19. As can be seen from all of Mayhew's communications on these trades.

with disastrous consequences, as a cabinet maker explained referring to effects of depression among the Spitalfields weavers.

> "Many weavers has took to our business of late. That's quite common now - their own's so bad; and some that used to hawk hearth stones about is turned Pembroke table-makers. The slaughterers don't care what kind of work it is, so long as its cheap. A table's a table they say, and thats all we want."(20)

Another source of cheap labour in the building trades was readily available in the form of immigrant country workers looking for work in London. It had been customary for carpenters from the country to come to London to gain experience before returning to set up for themselves. But opportunities for doing this were diminishing in the countryside as the rural economy itself was being transformed, with the effect that country labour became progressively synonymous with "surplus labour".(21) The only work the country carpenters were likely to find was inevitably among the speculative builders, the "strapping shops" and sweat shops and since very few of them were able to return, their continued exploitation assisted in the pressures to keep wages low for those who were not members of a trade society and working with an honourable establishment. The fate of unprotected labour was summed up in the experience of an unemployed jobbing carpenter who was destitute.

> "The reason for my being in the state that I am is because I never belonged to no society, nor no clubs nor nothing. I never could have belonged to our regular trade society, because I was never brought up regular to the business." (22)

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20. Metropolitan Letter LXV
21. J. Saville, Rural Depopulation in England and Wales (1957) pursues this theme. It was also a recurring theme in the reports of the Rural Correspondents in the Labour and the Poor survey in the Morning Chronicle. See P.E. Razzell and R.W. Wainwright eds. The Victorian Working Class (1973) pp 3-83.
22. Metropolitan Letter LXII July 25 1850

One of the many distinctions Mayhew drew between the skilled, honourable section of a trade and its larger sweated section was that in the former, wages were 'reglated by custom' and the wages of the latter were 'determined by competition.'(23) The skilled man who belonged to a trade society was usually paid in accordance with 'a book of rates' or in accordance with rates that were agreed upon by the trade society. Payment determined by competition inevitably entailed, as concommitants of low wages, the exploitation of female and juvenile labour, piecework, indifference to apprentiship, the imposition of long hours of work, and the simultaneous operation of these factors conspired to change the relationship of the artisan to his work and to the labour market generally. Mayhew calculated that "society men" usually comprised 'about one tenth of the whole', though Thompson advises the more conservative estimate of one-fifth or one-sixth.(24) The separation between these two groups are observed to derive from the differences in working experience. To go from one to the other amounted to moving between two different classes, or even different 'worlds'.

> 'The difference between the tailor at the West-end, working for better shops at the better prices, and the poor wretch slaving at "starvation wages" for the sweaters and slop shops of the East-End, has already been pointed out. The same marked contrast was also shown to exist between the society and non-society boot and shoe makers. The carpenters and joiners told the same story. There we found men renting houses of their own - some paying as much as £70 a year - and the non-society men overworked and underpaid, so that a few weeks' sickness reduced them to absolute pauperism. Nor, I regret to say can any other tale be told of the cabinet makers -..' (25)

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23. Metropolitan Letter LXV August 15, 1850
24. E.P. Thompson, op.cit., p277 f
25. Metropolitan Letter LXV

Mayhew's "honourable" - "dishonourable", "society" - "non-society" separation seems to have comprised the people Place had in mind when making distinctions between the 'ignorant' and the 'informed'. In Mayhew's work this separation can be seen as a culture conflict within the working class that derived from totally different life styles that were determined by different relationships to the productive system. The changes in manners and morals that Place emphasised appear here to be part of a huge structural change in economic and social relations. By 1850 the skilled London artisan occupied a social position that the unskilled or casual worker could hardly aspire to, let alone have regular contact with. It is important to recognise that the threat posed by the unskilled was experienced not just in terms of their abundance, but from a social distance created by increasing economic differentials. Mayhew seems to suggest that in many cases it was less a question of the skilled becoming better off but rather, the unskilled becoming worse off. The threat was a threat to status and to the living standards and life styles that economic differentials made possible. It was a threat that was felt by those who were, in Place's terms, respectable. This respectability was more likely to have been supported and re-inforced by the Trade Societies than actually caused by them. The increasing desire on the part of the skilled to segregate themselves where possible from the unskilled, which Place mentioned, can be seen in Mayhew's work as a response to a separation that had in fact already occurred. Any voluntary impulse to secure and maintain this social distance was, as it were, dependent on the prior existance of this distance. The skilled man's sense of superiority was an index of his consciousness of distance, of living, as Mayhew emphasised, in a different 'world'.

Obviously the skilled man's standard of living was an immediately tangible index of these different worlds. He was able to share in the benefits of an expansion in the production of consumer goods, unlike the unskilled, who were largely, if not totally precluded from this process. As Place noticed, increasing consumption had its chief focus in the home. He observed that an increasing degree of home-centredness had become one of the typical features of the respectable, skilled worker, who in paying more attention to personal hygiene was seized by 'the desire to possess more conveniences and better utensils ....'(26) It was in this sense that he recognised moral ramifications in economic change. Mayhew found that the capacity for domestic consumption was one of the most obvious distinctions to be drawn between the honourable and slop sections of a trade and would certainly have agreed with Place in this respect as to the clearly defined differences 'between the skilful and the unskilful workman in the same business.'(27) This distinction had even greater force when comparing the typical domestic conditions of honourable tailors with those in the slop trade.

> 'The very dwellings of the people are sufficient to tell you the wide differences between the two classes. In the one you occasionally find small statues of Shakespeare beneath glass shades; in the other all is dirt and foetor. The working tailor's comfortable first floor at the West-end is redolent with the perfume of the small bunch of violets that stands in a tumbler over the mantelpiece. The sweater's wretched garret is redolent with the stench of filth and herrings. The honourable part of the trade are intelligent artisans, while the slopworkers are generally almost brutified with their incessant toil, wretched pay, miserable food and filthy homes.'(28)

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26. B.M. Add.MSS. 27,827 f 51
27. Add. MSS. 35,144, The Improvement of the Working People, p 6
28. Metropolitan Letter XVII, December 14, 1849

A similar state of affairs existed among the cabinet makers, as it did in other trades.

> 'In the one you have the warm red glow of polished mahogany furniture; a clean carpet covers the floor; a few engravings in neat frames hang agaist the papered wall; and bookshelves or a bookcase have their appropriate furniture. Very white and bright coloured pot ornaments, with sometimes a few roses in a small vase, are reflected in the mirror over the mantelshelf. The East-end cabinet maker's room has <u>one</u> piece of furniture, which is generally the <u>principal</u> - the workman's bench. The walls are bare and sometimes the half black plaster is crumbling from them; all is dark and dingy, and of the furniture there is very little, and that it must be borne in mind, when the occupant is furniture-maker. A draw maker whom I saw in Bethnal-green had never been able to afford a chest of drawss for his own use; "besides," he added, "what do I want with drawers? I've nothing to put in them."' (29)

Mayhew drew attention to the fact that this capacity for home-centredness on the part of the skilled man was not only related to living standards, but also to the kinds of changes in moral bearings that were emphasised by Place. The honourable cabinet maker's increasing attention to their homes went hand in hand with their growing sobriety. An 'intelligent cabinet maker' recalled that heavy drinking had one been the norm.

> "This was fifteen years back. Now I'm satisfied that at least seven eighths of all who are in society are sober and temperate men. Indeed good masters won't have tipplers now-a-days."(30

Drink was identified more with the unskilled, which helped to bring the distinction between them and the skilled into a sharply defined moral focus. The trade societies became less tolerant of drunkeness as the social gap between skilled and unskilled rigidified. Increasing domestic consumption was commensurate with public sobriety, or as Place had it 'the money spent in the alehouse' was now applied to home and family. Mayhew was capable of relating this process to

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29. Metropolitan Letter LXIII, August 1st, 1850
30. ibid.

the details of work and thus showing the interdependence.

> 'The great majority of the cabinet makers are married men, and were described to me by the best informed parties as generally domestic men, living, wherever it was possible, near their workshops, and going home to every meal. They are not much of play-goers, a Christmas pantomime of any holiday spectacle being exceptions, especially where there is a family.'(31)

He also emphasised that honourable tradesmen not only learned the trade by apprenticeship, but usually took care to ensure that their own children were well enough educated for such an apprenticeship. This would tend to confirm what Place asserted of the artisan's family; that the standards of moral earnestness that he recognised were being passed down to children. The fact that the apprentices of the 'superior masters' were themselves usually the sons of tradesmen would suggest that recruitment into the respectable branches of a trade was dependent on family connection. It seemed that the apprentices of the honourable masters were more likely to be recruited from backgrounds of home-centred respectability.

Mayhew noticed that the separation of home and work was an important factor in the home-centredness of those working in the honourable trades. Though some of the respectable tailors did in fact work at home they consituted a minority in his reports. For the sweated worker, his garret was a place of work as it was for his wife and family. Home was more of a place to escape from than a comfortable refuge. The separation of home and work had clearly been internalised by the skilled carpenters and joiners, who changed into their more respectable clothes before they went home from work.

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31. ibid.

> 'Before the men leave work in the large shops, it is usual for them to change their working clothes for others which they keep in a little cupboard under their bench. Their appearance in the street is as respectable as that of any tradesman.'(32)

Respectability was manifested in cleanliness and standards of dress that were expected at home. Place recalled that no such separation between working and domestic standards was normal in his youth. He instanced the experience of his son-in-law's father, 'a principal master currier in London' who was told when he turned up for his first job respectably dressed to "go and get out of his mother's wool.' He told Place that a journeyman currier was never expected to be seen in anything but his working jacket. Mayhew registered the change in standards that had taken place among the curriers 'in society'.

> 'As is common enough with working men of the better class whose trade necessitates the wearing of coarse and inexpensive clothing, and linen all day, the curriers are rather remarkable for being well dressed and with superior linen on Sundays, or when they "dress to go out on an evening". Their boots are often of the very best.' (33)

Very different standards operated in the non-society sections of each trade. The carpenters working for "the low speculating builders" were generally men of 'dissipated habits'.

> 'What little they get I am assured is spent on beer or gin, they have seldom a second suit to their backs. They are generally to be seen on Sunday lounging about the suburbs of London with their working clothes on, and their rules sticking from their side pockets - the only difference in their attire being, perhaps, that they have a clean shirt and clean pair of shoes.'(34)

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32. Metropolitan Letter LX, July 11th 1850

33. Add.MSS. 35,142 f 41
    Metropolitan Letter LXXVIII November 15 1850

34. Metropolitan Letter LX

The differences in appearance, sartorial manifestations of respectability or the lack of it, reflected the differences in domestic standards that were themselves rooted in entirely different working worlds. Those working in the sweated trades often worked at home. The cases of the tailors, the boot and shoe makers and the cabinet makers of the East-end demonstrated how this could not be reconciled with domestic care and respectability. In these cases, long hours of work in the cramped conditions of a single room and involving the labour of wives and children operated against the possibility of experiencing home as being different from work. Any separation between home and work, or leisure and work, effectively did not exist. In addition there was neither space to accomodate any reasonable furniture, nor money to provide it, even had there been the will to do so. When home, usually one crowded room, was separated from work, the sweated workman was still in no position to be respectable because of the demoralising disciplines of work and poverty, made remorseless by the absence of opportunity or hope. The example of the carpenters working for the speculative builders and the "strapping shops" makes this clear.

> 'There it will be found that all the regulations which are observed to ensure skilled labour are utterly disregarded; the work is scamped and the operative is underpaid, and he not only loses thereby his self-respect and self-reliance, but sinks into drunkeness and demoralisation. The workman is moreover made the means of carrying out the system which results in his own degradation.'(35)

Unlike "regular work", sweated work created the conditions for domestic neglect, self-neglect and, as Mayhew said, demoralisation

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35. ibid

and drunkeness. These were observed as the products of economic and social pressures against which the unskilled worker had no redress. He was in no position to exert the kind of moral effort that was approved by Place and encouraged by the Trade Societies. Apart from being exhausted he was also isolated. In this sense he was alienated in the full Marxist sense. The process by which he was alienated from the product of his labour was the same one that left him isolated and unaffirmed by the supports of a Trade Society. He was, as Mayhew demonstrated, an accomplice to his own exploitation and therefore to his own sense of himself as an instrument to be used.

Unlike the sweated workers the respectable skilled artisans expected to be able "to maintain their wives and families". They were able to rent unfurnished rooms and some were householders. Mayhew noted that many of the carpenters were householders, 'paying as much as £70 per year rent, and letting off appartments, so as to be nearly or wholly rent free.'(36) In these circumstances wives were not expected to work except at home, a tendency that confirmed the mutually reinforcing relations between high wages, society membership and the home-centredness that was favourable to the espousal of sobriety. This inter-dependence was well illustrated in the testimoney of a bedstead maker speaking for the members of his society.

> "There is a great improvement since I first knew bedstead makers in point of temperance. There used to be hard drinking and less working. In 1810, when we met for society purposes, our allowance

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36. ibid. The importance of acquiring unfurnished accomodation had been emphasised by Place. He viewed this as necessary to a respectable style of life.

> of fourpence a night per man that had to attend was drunk in an hour; now its not consumed in the course of the meeting. Several of us are householders, and can support our wives and families comfortably. I don't think one of the wives of the members of our society work in any way but for the family." (37)

This was amongst the normal expectations of the carpenters and joiners who would not 'allow' their wives to do 'any other work than attend to their domestic and family duties', though it was conceded that some of them took in washing or kept "small general shops".(38) The resentment with which the breaking of this standard was met was a measure of the extent it was aspired to. Many of the tailors who were unable to find shop work away from home were forced to dragoon their wives and families to help them and resented the economic and status decline that was involved in this. (39)

Female labour was commonly linked to domestic neglect in the minds of the Victorians.(40) The morally deleterious effects of this conjunction were to be seen particularly in drunkeness in the father and delinquency in the children. It is doubtful whether this anxious charge was justified, but there can be no doubt that female labour was not consistent with a notion of a respectable and self-respecting family. This point had particular force in an economy where women were in fact essential, but treated as marginal in working roles that were either servile or residual.

In Mayhew's reports, home-centred respectability was dependent upon a complicated system of material supports which were favourable to any moral effort that it might have been taken to reflect. If wives aided by their daughters, were to be able to attend to their "domestic

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37. Metropolitan Letter LXIII August 1st 1850
38. Metropolitan Letter LX July 11th 1850
39. Metropolitan Letter XVI December 11th 1849
40. This anxiety has been investigated in the context of the factory areas of the North West. See Margaret Hewitt, Wives and Mothers in Victorian Industry (1958)

duties", they had to be supported by a well-paid and preferably regularly paid husband. Mayhew suggested that the majority of 'society men' realised their expectations in this respect, but their experience was that of a minority. The example of the coopers who were not unskilled shows why this was so. Their work was subject to seasonal fluctuations and they depended on their wives to take in slop work. As a result they are seen as being more careless of home and family than other artisan groups. An 'intelligent member of the trade' told Mayhew:

> "I don't consider that coopers' children are properly looked after, or that they are as well educated as they ought to be. I believe that it is owning to the drinking habits of our trade that the men's families are neglected as they are; perhaps another reason for this is, because during the slack season it takes all the men can earn to procure even food for their families. Upon an average in the slack season, which lasts about four months of the year, I think the coopers' earnings are not above ten shillings a week. In the brisk, however they make more than thirty shillings a week; and I have no doubt that it is this great fluctuation in their incomes that makes the men less provident and less attentive to their homes than they otherwise would be. I think the majority of coopers' wives take in slop work and many of their daughters do so. This has been the custom as long as I can remember. The cause of the coopers' wives taking to slop work is partly owing to the slackness of the trade at certain times and partly to their living in the neighbourhood of the slop sellers." (41)

Female labour and domestic neglect are observed as the effects of irregular work, the subject of one of Mayhew's principal organising themes. The testimony of the cooper applied with special relevence to the vast numbers of unskilled and sweated. The labour of married women was deeply rooted in the mutually reinforcing phenomena of poverty and casuality. As such it was easily exploitable and its association with domestic neglect is most properly to be seen as a symptom of a malaise that engulfed whole families and neighbourhoods. Respectability depended upon a capacity to resist this malaise

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41. Metropolitan Letter LXIX September 12 1850

that was hostile or indifferent to the moral effort of self-improvement. To be 'in society' meant that, in addition to work which affirmed a man's status as a skilled workman, he had some protection from the twin forces of necessity and economic compulsion that habituated the unprotected urban poor to a style of life which Oscar Lewis had conceptualised as 'the culture of poverty'.(42) Casual and irregular work are central to the realities upon which this concept is focussed.

If self-reliance, aspired to inwardly and its achievement affirmed publicly, was a fundamental constituent of respectability, it was obviously impossible to achieve for those who were irregularly employed. It has already been shown that the regularisation of work was crucially important in establishing routines that made their imprint on leisure time. The factory owners, in order to achieve new productive goals, required clock disciplined workers, who would be reliable and not given to riotous (irregular) enjoyments, or improvident habits and they arranged their "moral machinery" accordingly. However, the factory did not bring an end to casual work. In London, people were involved in a multitude of trades and occupations that were given to varying degrees of casuality and were laid off and on according to demand in a highly labour intensive economic structure. Their employment was determined by factors that were external to them and completely out of control. Their moral "irregularities" are seen by Mayhew to be a direct consequence of these external factors. It was a point that he made with special force in his investigation of casual labour in the London docks. The problem of casuality was endemic here. The docks attracted every kind of refugee from other occupations that had failed

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42. Oscar Lewis, La Vida (1967)

them - 'indeed everyone who wants a loaf and is willing to work for it.'(43) In addition to the problem of "surplus labour" the dock labourer had also to contend with the daunting irregularities of the wind in a pre-steamship period. Mayhew related this working experience to the life style of the dock labourer.

> 'But where the means of subsistance occasionally rise to fifteen shillings a week, and occasionally sink to nothing, it is absurd to look for prudence economy or moderation. Regularity of habits are incompatible with irregularity of income - indeed, the very conditions necessary to the formation of any habit whatsoever are, that the act or thing to which we are to become habituated should be repeated at frequent and regular intervals. It is a moral impossibility that the class of laboureres who are only occasionally employed should be either generally industrious or temperate; both industry and temperance being habits produced by constancy of employment and uniformity of income. Hence where the greatest fluctuation occurs in the labour, there of course will be the greatest idleness and improvidence; where the greatest want generally is, there we shall find the greatest occasional excess; where, from uncertainty of the occupation prudence is most needed, there strange to say, we shall meet the highest imprudence of all!' (44)

The theme of externally imposed irregularities of employment resulting in "irrational" expenditure was a recurring one. Most of the London trades were subject to seasonal fluctuations in the demand for labour and their impact was most immediately and damagingly felt in the sweated trades. Casuality created a whole network of dependencies that maintained families in poverty and even accustomed them to it. The unskilled were particularly vulnerable to publicans, shopkeepers and lodging house keepers who acted as middlemen or sub-contractors for local employers. Employment in these cases was dependent on custom and an insecure labour force could easily be converted into customers, often paying higher prices than they needed to.(45) This form of

43. Metropolitan Letter III October 26 1849
44. Metropolitan Letter IV October 30 1849
45. Metropolitan Letters XIX December 21 1849, XXII January 1st 1850 XXIV January 8 1850, LVIII June 27 1850
This type of exploitation had many variants throughout the country. Charles Mackay, investigating the Liverpool Docks while Mayhew was interviewing dock workers in London, found the same kind of evidence. See Labour and the Poor, Liverpool Letter IV, June 10 1850. It was

exploitation was endemic around the docks, but it was also very familiar in a host of other occupations, where 'surplus labour' abounded. The example of the tailors illustrates this common experience and the stages through which chronic vulnerability and demoralisation were made commensurate. Mayhew commented of them that their trade 'has its periods of slack and brisk' and he pointed to the forces that were 'at work to demoralise, and occasionally to change the operative tailor from the sober, industrious, and intelligent artisan, into the intemperate, erratic and fatuous workman.' He was informed by a tailor that this process occured when a man reached the sweated branches of his trade and was linked to the necessity of using a pub as a "house of call" when he was unemployed.

> "It is to the casual hands that the intemperance of the tailors as a class is mostly limited - those who have regular employment are in general steady, decent and intelligent people. The intemperance for which the casual hands are distinguished arises chiefly from their being 'called on' at public houses. A master who wants an extra number of workmen to complete his work, sends to a certain house of call in the neighbourhood; this house of call is invariably a public house, ... The men off trade and seeking for employment are kept knocking about at the public house all the day through. The consequence of this is that the day is passed in drinking, and habits of intemperance are produced which it is almost impossible to withstand.....

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45. (contd) a familiar part of the "gang system" in the countryside as reported in the Report of Women and Children in Agriculture 1843 (510). The Tommy Shop was as familiar to many factory workers as it was to the miners and iron workers of South Wales. See my introduction to Razzell and Wainwright, op.cit. p xxiv.

> It astonishes me how some of them live. They cannot go home to their garrets, for they have no fire there, and if they absent themselves from the public house they lose their chance of work." (46)

Mayhew's placing of 'improvidence' within the context of the determinants of economic opportunity, or more broadly of "life chances", obviously contradicted the Victorian analysis of poverty that attributed responsibility to the individual. In discussing moral change and the rather special part played in it by the skilled, Place had emphasised the importance of minimising chance by the creation and achievement of future orientated goals. There seemed to be little chance for the unskilled to make any provision against chance in the form of saving. Place's paradigm of moral improvement was focussed on the individual, but as the skilled and honourable workman knew, it was only applicable through the collaborative action and support of exclusive Trade Society membership. The fact that only a minority were in a position to formulate economic goals that extended beyond the boundaries of immediate need, let alone immediate gratification, ensured that the cultural dividing line between the respectable and the roughs remained intact. Mayhew's work shows quite clearly how the social basis of a culture conflict within the working class was to be explained in terms of different and often opposing life styles were determined. The existence of a huge sub-stratum of "surplus labour" provided a focus for the moralisation of social segregation. It appears to have given special point to the normative basis of respectability with which the skilled and 'regular' artisan became more completely identified out of a sense of recoil and threat. Respectability is inferred as being a response to social distance, rather than a cause as Place stipulated. Mayhew repeatedly

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46. Metropolitan Letter XVI December 11th 1849

related the position from which the skilled man looked downwards at other groups to the working experience that supported his distinctive life style.

Differences in political consciousness were further evidence of the same phenomenon - they were symptomatic of the cultural gap that Place testified to as a contrast to the popular and inclusive cultural milieu of his youth. In a very well-known passage Mayhew illustrates a glaring dimension of the gulf between the West-end and East-end.

> 'In passing from the skilled operative of the West-end to the unskilled workman of the Eastern quarter of London, the moral and intellectual change is so great that it seems as if we are in a new land among another race. The artisans are almost to a man red-hot politicians. They are sufficiently educated and thoughtful to have a sense of their importance in the state...
>
> The unskilled are a different class of people. As yet they are as unpolitical as footmen. Instead of entertaining violently democratic opinions they appear to have no political opinions whatever, or, if they do possess any, they lean towards the maintenance "of things as they are" than towards the ascendancy of the working people.' (47)

This statement has a direct bearing on Place's view of the value or meaning of education and political consciousness. He asserted that ignorance and deference were inter-related characteristics of the "average" artisan of his youth and that political awareness and educated intelligence were signs of his subsequent "improvement" Deference was seen by him as a function of ignorance and a lack of self-respect, qualities which he came to dentify with the unskilled. In this respect the unskilled labourers in Mayhew's reports would appear to have had something in common with the "average" artisans mentioned by Place. Mayhew instanced the coal-whippers as examples of the unskilled man's deference and conservatism. They 'were

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47. Metropolitan Letter XIX December 21, 1849

extremely proud of their having turned out to a man on April 10th, 1848, and become special constables for the maintenance of "law and order" on the day of the great Chartist "demonstration".'(48)

Both Place and Mayhew identified political awareness and intellectual capacity with the skilled and respectable, but their respective explanations for this conjunction were clearly different from one another. For Place, political awareness resulted chiefly from self-education, which was less a manifestation of improvement and respectability than a cause of these essentially moral qualities. As Mayhew saw it, respectability depended upon the material supports of regular employment and work in the honourable trades. Different experiences of work, income and life style provided the basis of a separation between what Place called 'the ignorant and the informed'. Thompson has remarked that those people who had most need, had least time for 'political reflection', a judgement which Mayhew repeatedly confirmed with his concentration on the minutiae of political motivation, as is illustrated in the case of a fancy cabinet maker retorting on the subject of his political interests:

> 'Politics sir, whats politics to me compared with getting my dinner - and whats getting my dinner, compared to getting food for my children?" (49)

He was working in a trade that had been affected by the competition of the sweaters and where longer working hours were consequently forced into existence. Mayhew observed that having to work in their own rooms, rather than in a shop 'has rendered them more unsocial than they were and less disposed for the interchange

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48. ibid.
49. Metropolitan Letter LXIV August 8 1850

of good offices with their fellow-workmen, as well as less regardful of their position and their rights as skilled labourers.'(50)

This, as he saw it, was the inevitable fate of unprotected labour and throughout his investigation he made it clear that this view was shared by 'society men'. It was in opposition to the threat which it presented that the Trade Societies of the skilled functioned in order to defend the standard of living and the status of their members - the status, that is, of a labour aristocracy. Most of the artisans interviewed by Mayhew felt that they were being threatened and their political awareness can be seen in relation to their concern to preserve their position of sectional superiority in the labour market. The Trade Societies were not committed to unifying the working class, (quite certainly not before 1850) but to protecting a limited membership, guaranteeing skills, excluding unapprenticed labour and thus carrying the customary apprenticeship principle into an increasingly competitive industrial capitalist society. They not only fostered the interests of a labour aristocracy, but encouraged it to see itself as such.

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50 ibid.

CHAPTER V

The contrasting emphases in the work of Place and Mayhew obviously stem from the differences in relationship which they had to their subject. Place was more moral, less empirical and sociological than Mayhew. He does, however, focus attention on some of the most important general factors that operated in the change of moral tone of the "average" artisan during his lifetime. As The Autobiography and the volumes on manners and morals show, he was quite capable of asking sociological questions. For him, moral passion and sociological insight were complementary rather than mutually exclusive activities, as can be seen from his attempts to examine dominant values in their cultural context and to see the transformation of those values in relation to a shift in a whole culture. Mayhew was concerned with more specific mechanisms of change within the artisan world. He attempted to see the artisan much more fully within the context of the labour market as a whole, with the result that changes in moral emphases are explicitly related to the dynamic processes of capitalist social relationships. His approach to social and moral change was dialectical. He was, as it were, unconsciously Marxist in orientation.

From the work of Place and Mayhew it is possible to see some of the complexity involved in ideas of respectability as well as many of the social ramifications of this phenomenon. This chapter focusses on a number of inter-related aspects of respectability which emerge from their evidence, namely:

the idea of self respect independent of wealth or status;

concern to be seen to be respectable;

privacy and homecentredness as expressions of respectability;

the relation of respectability to ideas of class and status;

the moralisation of social distance which is at work in disassociation;

the importance of the non-respectable ("the roughs") in providing a reactive focus for the socially and psychologically defensive nature of respectability.

Taking "self respect" as his value reference, Place ascribed to growing numbers of trade and political societies an ideological and moral role. They are seen as social agents of moral change. The really distinguishing element of these societies was their organisation, rather than the size of their membership. In their day to day working Place saw them reflecting the qualities they wished to inculcate into others. Composed of 'sober men' concerned with political and value goals, they are regarded as rational in their procedures and moral in their effects, with their emphasis upon self improvement and the means of its achievement. Political awareness is implicitly seen as an expression of increasing self consciousness. Short term needs and wants are sublimated for the sake of long term goals, with the result that the characteristic of reserve becomes more dominant.

This feature of Radicalism after the 1780s can be quite sharply contrasted with the Wilkes inspired Radicalism of the 1760s, when the artisan was for the first time publicly affirmed as possessing a political status. But the Wilkite response expressed more in the flouting of authority than in organised activity to.

reform it. The Radicalism which involved Place both as witness and early participant, might well have had some of the ground prepared for it by the earlier response, but it differed fundamentally because it was more formally organised. It was, in this respect, a contradiction of the dominant pressures of a cultural legacy, which made the achievement of long term goals almost impossible without self discipline and cooperation. Behaviour is seen to be transformed through the fusion, in collaborative activity, of the puritan moral goals of individual autonomy and responsibility with the political goals of democracy and the rejection of "tyrannical" and, therefore, "irrational" priveledge.

There seems to be little ground for thinking that the change in the moral orientation of the artisan, asserted by Place, can be ascribed simply to the rules that purported to govern it. Moral injunctions stressing the importance of sobriety, hard work, honesty and family life were by no means new; they had existed for centuries without there necessarily being a close correspondence in the behaviour of the people who were exposed to them. However, there was an increasing degree of apparent correspondence between society rules and the behaviour of the skilled in the first half of the nineteenth century. As already demonstrated, many of Mayhew's skilled informants spoke of the tendency for the artisan to become more sober, home-centred, educated and concerned for "rational amusements".

In Place's evidence the themes of the skilled man's growing self respect and the role of the political and trade societies in this dimension of respectability are quite clearly linked to the themes of the disintegration of eighteenth century popular culture

and increasing social segregation. He described a type of organisation which consciously departed from the political and social traditions of "the crowd", and, as he suggests, was itself an indicator of a change in the bearings of a popular culture. In the emergence of an organised plebeian political tradition, there is a breaking away from the more florid and violent forms of protest, which registered the enthusiasms and aspirations of the crowd in a recurring cycle of mountings up and fallings off, leaving the established political structure much as it was before. Place chose to give particular attention to the types of organisation that sought to reform political institutions by institutional means. The symbols of eighteenth century popular protest were not serviceable to clubs and societies who were becoming more concerned with organisation than expression.

Actual involvement in the process of achieving the goal of reform would have reinforced the idea of respectability, which in the years between the 1790s and 1830s could be considered, as already mentioned, a moral revaluation of dominant eighteenth century values. Radicalism stoutly focussed the resentment of authority, deference and priveledge; but it also rejected some of the most fundamental values of the culture from which it had emerged. The artisan can be seen as being responsive to the moral injunctions of Radicalism, because he is increasingly involved in it. In so doing, he becomes an accomplice to the process of social and cultural separation, which provided, as Place emphasised, a crucial context for a change in moral bearings. He becomes more aware of a cultural superiority, from which follows a moral superiority over, and separation from, those less organised groups who can more readily be dismissed as "roughs".

In pointing to the more organised types of societies that grew from about the 1790s, Place is describing the developing institutionalisation of plebeian political activity. Rude has shown that the less formally organised, but more typical political responses of the eighteenth century were reflected in the personality of a charismatic figure who embodied the aspirations of the crowd. This charismatic type of leadership was an integral feature of a popular cultural tradition. Wilkes was a charismatic leader on a vast scale. His popularity resided in his ability to embody or symbolise the objectives and the values of the crowd in his behaviour, in his flamboyant style. He was, of course, an accomplished organiser of the means whereby his personality could be communicated. Though he gave the artisans, shopkeepers and wage earners a sense of identity, of status and political significance, he did little to organise political activity in relation to specific goals. It is doubtful if he could have done so, even had he wanted to. The charismatic impact of his character was as much chosen and elaborated by those who supported him as by himself. The performance was made to matter more than organisation.(1) By contrast, the societies Place described and had experience of were less flamboyant and more rational in the Weberian sense of having specific goals as their raison d'etre. The L.C.S. membership as reported by Place appear to have had some of the sober characteristics of sober bureaucrats.

Though the Radicalism of these years spawned societies and organisations with different purposes from month to month, it provided

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1. G. Rude: Wilkes and Liberty (1964)
   J. Brewer: Party, Ideology and Politics at the Accession of George III (1976)

a focus for attempts to establish enduring institutions which could function independently of particular personalities. E.P. Thompson, in recreating the Radical response between 1790 and 1830, has shown that it would be misleading to take Place's accounts of events and their meanings as being either sufficiently inclusive or representative of the mainstream of feeling within the artisan world. But he does emphasise that reserve and method were among the cardinal virtues of Radicalism in these years and that its cultural legacy was to be seen in the children of the next generation.(2) It is here that Mayhew largely confirms the general picture.

Despite the utilitarian bias, Place has drawn attention to a very important aspect of moral change. It was in the context of organised institutions that the artisans were affirmed and affirmed themselves politically and socially. Ideas of power and status were morally registered as relating to ideas of self respect. Respectability in this context is a plebeian assertion of morality, rather than property, as a standard of human value. The characteristic of reserve can be seen as an assertion of an alternative standard, which gradually became assimilated and institutionalised within the skilled working class.

In the most general terms Place appears to have regarded respectability as a moral effect of the rationalisation of social life. In pointing to legal reform, the decline in violence, improvements in standards of hygiene, the growing importance of education (if effectively only as a public issue), he was really focussing

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2. E.P. Thompson: op.cit (1968) p 817

attention on social and institutional changes that occurred in response to the multivarious pressures of industrialisation. He affirmed the Industrial Revolution, because, as he saw it, it held out the promise that individuals might liberate themselves from the tyranny of chance. His emphasis on the transition from fatalism to rationality amounts to kind of crude prefiguration of one of the most important themes in Weberian sociology. This is not to say that Place actually anticipated Weber, but more that his concerns and evaluations have been conceptualised in the latter's typology of social action.(3)

Place used the theme of moral improvement as a vehicle for trying to distinguish between different dominant types of action. His explanation of moral change draws attention, in his own way, to a distinction between rational and non-rational action. It is an attempt to show that a capacity for respectability was dependent in general terms upon the transition of a culture, in which the dominant types of action are what Weber referred to as "affective" and "traditional" to one in which the dominant type of action is "rational" in relation to both goals and values. In the one case Place saw few chances for self improvement, because of the maintenance of a static situation; whereas in the other there was "progress" and development.

The great changes that occurred among the independent tradesmen, artisans and shopkeepers who had intermingled at the centre of eighteenth century economic life was to be explained in their increasing capacity by the 1820s to be motivated by more long range

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3. M. Weber: The Theory of Economic and Social Organisation Trans. A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons. (1964) pp115-118

goals. The replacement of "affective" by "rational" action is seen as allowing them to break through the trap of custom which confined them in Place's terms to "ignorance", political impotence and unmitigated subservience to chance. The chief indicators of this transition are given as a greater willingness to save, to work more regularly and reliably, to spend more rationally, which meant being more home-centred and therefore private.

Place was confident that both the process and the product of economic expansion were contributory to the change in morals he so confidently affirmed. It is not necessary to take his word on this point, but it does, nevertheless, point to an important relationship between the facts of economic growth and the various dimensions of respectability that have been outlined here, with particular reference to saving and to expenditure on domestic consumer goods. He seems to have set out a model of the self-helping, self-denying, rational and independent producer not merely as an ideal, but as indicative of the transformation he asserted. The attention he gave to the thirtieth anniversary celebrations of Hardy's acquittal illustrates this.(4) Many of the original members of the L.C.S. had become employers with their own businesses. Though this aspiration remained an ideal for the skilled workman, it became less and less likely to be realised, as Mayhew showed. The attention that Place gives to the skilled workman as consumer is perhaps, as relevent, for it underlines the obvious fact that this was more likely to have concerned a minority, though he specially emphasised the "beneficial" effects of 'the

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4. B.M. Add. MSS. 35,142 f 94. It was of this meeting that Place noted that many older people, 'whose improvement has been so gradual' found it difficult to recall the moral tone of their youth.

rapid increase of wealth and its more general diffusion' which could be seen in the expansion in the supply of consumer goods. This might suggest that income was the key factor in growing domestic expenditure, but he also implied that it was influenced by an independent change in value orientation, as can be seen by his assertion that in his youth the artisans with the best wages had tended to spend their surpluses in the taverns, rather than in the home. Whether or not changes in expenditure to a more home-centred kind resulted from an increase in the supply of goods, from change in income, or from a change in values, is not made entirely clear. Changes in styles of expenditure are presented as being more rational in the sense that wages become more specifically related to domestic consumer goals, which both express and reinforce home-centredness. This aspect of domestic consumption is of particular importance, because it was related to a greater emphasis on parental care, especially in the area of scrutiny of the morals of children. It is also suggests that dimension of respectability which was most effectively to be realised when there was security of income; namely being seen to be respectable.

The growth in effective demand for domestic consumer goods can be seen as a agent of moral change for those that could afford them, in that positive moral sanction was applied to more private life styles. It is not really surprising that new patterns of expenditure were focussed on the home since the expansion in the supply of consumer goods was projected at a family market. Increases in the supply and consumption of cotton clothing, boots and shoes, furniture and pottery are all evidence of this. Though he implied that new

consumption patterns could not be understood purely in terms of rising incomes and new forms of production, Place nevertheless considered that the cultural change he described would not have been possible without being supported by sustained economic growth.

As the ethos of privacy was sanctioned morally and reinforced economically, so a wedge was increasingly driven into a culture which had depended for its vitality upon the fluency and variety of social relationships. It was a culture that was essentially public. There had been plenty of attempts in the past to control the more troublesome features of this popular culture with its propensity for riot, cruelty and unpredictability. Tracts extolling the virtues of restraint and domestic harmony were not exclusively the products of the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. They had been common enough in the seventeenth century and before. There were however no effective means for a broad social application of puritan constraint. As Place saw it, economic expansion not only provided a chance for improving living standards, but for encouraging the habits upon which that expansion was reputedly based; namely self-restraint and the ability to defer immediate wants for more long range goals, whether they applied to production or consumption.

Broad generalisations about working class life expectation in the first half of the nineteenth century are best avoided, as can be seen in the example of the Standard of Living Debate. But, if increasing longevity was related to changes in living standards it was more likely to apply to those sections of the labour market who were able to share in the benefits of economic growth. The artisan who was

protected by skill and trade society membership was more likely to have been affected by improving living standards, as Mayhew repeatedly demonstrated. Increased longevity would have assisted in extending expectations about life, and possibly given particular point to the value of forming more long range goals. As Place repeatedly asserted, improved living standards were expressed by increasing domestic consumption. Economic expansion was thus to be seen as dynamically supportive to moral improvement and as a new agent of social control.

In order for income to be related more systematically to domestic consumer goods, it had, as Mayhew showed, to be regular and secure. Irregularity of income tended inevitably to be reflected in "irrational" expenditure. By relating the question of respectability to differences in relationship to the productive system, he pointed to that dimension of working class respectability that was enmeshed with ideas of class and status. While respectability can be seen in relation to self respect, which itself was asserted inwardly and confirmed outwardly by a more "rational" life style, the capacity to possess the symbols of this quality were ultimately determined by market power. Irrational forces were dominant even in the face of the most unshakeable aspiration towards respectability. This was the crucial moral paradox of respectability, and as Roberts recalled of Salford, it was a paradox that was rooted with special harshness in the mainstream of working class experience.

The enduring nature of this working class moral preoccupation can be seen in the tension involved in the moral significance of a self respecting and respectable family ideal and the fact that the material supports for this model were both socially limited and economically

uncertain. Many of Mayhew's informants expressed the desire to live respectably. The majority of those who had no such aspiration existed within a limpen-proletariat of sweated labour, casual workers and street sellers. For those who lived on the most precarious margins of the market, it was difficult to identify with any dominant moral code of respectability. Being outside the social milieux where it was dominant, they were unlikely to be affected by it. The only institutions where these values would have been encountered would have been prisons and workhouses.

Place's assertions about the artisan and the ways in which his values and life style changed in response to ideological pressure and economic change would suggest that the skilled played an essential role in the expansion of the market for consumer goods. In assessing the social groups who contributed to the home market in the Industrial Revolution, D.E.C. Eversley has seen the artisans and tradesmen of the period as part of a "nascent bourgeoisie"(5) The rise in income that attributes to this group does not automatically explain changes in expenditure patterns, which as Place understood, signified a change in taste and value orientation. Harold Perkin has suggested that this change in taste is to be explained by 'the compulsive urge for imitating the spending habits of one's betters.'(6) He regards this process of social emulation as the key to the expansion in demand for consumer goods. Place regarded this process as having the potential to transform even the poorest and most outcase sections of society, asserting that:

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5. D.E.C. Eversley: "The Home Market and Economic Growth in England." in Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution: Essays present to J.D. Chambers: Ed. E.L. Jones and G.E.Mingay (1967)chap9. The nascent bourgeoisie to which he refers consists of 'the artisans, the tradesmen, the more substantial farmers, the engineers and clerks' p 254

> '...as men are always to some extent influenced by the example of those above them, so in this case even the meanest, the most ignorant and the most depraved, with some exceptions, are bettered by the example of the informed workmen.'(7)

This is hard to reconcile with his view that the distance was growing between the "ignorant and informed."

Any process of social emulation is bound to be limited by the economic capacity and motives of the imitating group. The evidence of Place and Mayhew shows that only the skilled within the London working class were in an economic position to adopt the kind of life styles that could be endorsed by any bourgeois system of values. However, the adoption of respectable life styles by the skilled is viewed in a new political context by Place and is related to the desire to be seen to be respectable. The credibility of a working class political challenge was significantly dependent upon this. In showing that it was the skilled worker who was most politically articulate, Mayhew also drew attention to his concommitant respectable life style.

Place spoke almost simultaneously of increasing social segregation and the existence of influence and emulation as mechanisms for the downward percolation of both living standards and moral standards. The contradiction is probably more apparent than real. It would seem that that social segregation and social emulation were complementary processes. Emulation is usually understood as a means whereby one group imitates the standards it identifies with its social superiors, in order to compensate for feelings of inferiority. By so doing it hopes to disassociate itself from groups that it regards as inferior. But, as Mayhew showed so well, disassociation was an expression of

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6. H.J. Perkin: 'The Social Causes of the Industrial Revolution' Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 1969 p 140
7. F. Place: Improvement of the Working People (1834) p 10

social distance as a function of market mechanisms and voluntary desires to affirm and extend distance as a response to market situation.

It was through market mechanisms such as Mayhew described that working class respectability becomes linked with hierarchy. Ideas of class and status are inseparable from the moral code of respectability. Thomas Wright, the journyman engineer, was recognising this connection in his judgement that the unskilled should be "kept in their place."(8) Being convinced of his own respectability, the skilled worker, he felt, resented the claim to superiority claimed by the white collar worker over the artisan. The skilled artisan did not assist in the exercise of authority in work and in this respect their social terms of reference were different. One of the great values of Mayhew's work was its demonstration of the fact that respectability was connected to different ideas about work and to different experiences of it. For him, as for Marx, work was a fundamental life experience which shaped consciousness.

The skilled man's position of acknowledged superiority in a labour market which spawned a disproportionate growth in the numbers of unskilled was a crucial factor in his apparent emulation of an outwardly bourgeois style. Any identification with status superiors, whose style of life was firmly commensurate with social and moral dominance, has to be set against his disassociation from his status inferiors, whose increase was a focus for anxiety. It is simultaneously an assertion of self-respect and the expression of a preoccupation to be seen to be respectable - a confirmation of his status at the:

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8. T. Wright: Our New Masters (1873) pp5-6

apex of the working class. This apparent emulation provides a classic example of how his identification and disassociation were interdependent parts of the same response. His increasing capacity for privacy and home-centredness, which contributed to the expansion of the home market, can be seen in this social cum moral context of identification and disassociation.

Social emulation cannot be assumed to be a continuous process of downward percolation of standards and values. There were socially determined limits to this process and the growing numbers who could not be touched by it gave special point to the socially defensive nature of respectability. The Select Committee on Street Improvement in London noted in 1838 that:

> '...there were districts through which no great thoroughfares passed, and which were wholly occupied by a dense population composed of the lowest class of persons who being entirely secluded from the observation and influence of better educated neighbours, exhibited a state of moral degradation deeply to be deplored.' (9)

Here was an environment felt to be full of threat and assiduously avoided where possible. In their observations on the segregation of the respectable from the roughs, Place and Mayhew were both pointing to the socially defensive nature of respectability. As Mayhew emphasised, the sense of threat was related to the whole context of the artisan's life. The increasing pressure of unskilled and casual labour was felt more acutely by some groups than by others. Those working in specialist trades like jewellery and other luxury trades were relatively unaffected, whereas the very large groups like the tailors,

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9. Quoted in P.J. Edwards: London County Council: A History of Street Improvements 1855-97 (1898) p.10

boot and shoe makers and carpenters knew themselves to be seriously threatened.(10) It was pressure from people whose predicament had created, and was extending, a slum environment where marginality was the norm. As such it was a vivid focus for anxieties about "dropping down", that became even more familiar to later generations.

The extension of slum environments grew in proportion to the rate at which competition increased casuality. W. Ashworth has defined the economic reality of a slum as 'the presence of a market for casual labour.'(11) The competition and casuality that Mayhew revealed as actual and potential threats to the status and stability of the skilled worker must be considered in the context of demographic change that made labour so susceptible to competitive manipulation in the market. London's nineteenth century economy was notorious for its labour intensity because of the crude increase in the volume of labour. In the first half of the century it grew by two and half times from a very large base.

The Population Increase in London 1801 - 1851(12)

Year	Population	Increase %
1801	958,863	-
1811	1,138,815	18.77
1821	1,378,947	21.09
1831	1,654,994	20.02
1841	1,948,417	17.73
1851	2,362,236	21.24

10. P.E. Razzell and R.W. Wainwright: op.cit.(1973) pp 91-161
E.P. Thompson and Eileen Yeo: op.cit. (1971)
G. Stedman-Jones: Outcast London (1971) Pt.I pp 19-155
11. W. Ashworth: The Genesis of Modern Town Planning (1954) p 20.
12. R. Price-Williams: 'The Population of London 1801-1881'
Journal of the Statistical Society Vol.1885 Vol48 pp 398-399

During this period the central districts were the critical focus of growth and the scene of the main influx of immigrants. As these were the areas of the chief labour markets, it meant that they became chronically congested.(13) The growth in the population densities of the East End serve to illustrate this well.

POPULATION DENSITY - GROWTH IN PEOPLE PER ACRE 1801 - 1851 (14)

DISTRICT	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851
Shoreditch	54.84	69.29	83.54	108.15	131.60	172.33
Bethnal Green	30.23	45.55	61.89	84.03	100.39	122.21
Whitechapel	153.77	168.47	185.30	172.42	192.92	214.41
St George's in the East	99.39	126.37	152.71	180.78	194.13	227.12
Stepney	59.53	65.44	69.87	91.55	107.79	128.68

A market for casual labour was by definition an overcrowded one. Well before 1850 the problem of overcrowding was further exacerpated by schemes for social improvement like roads, docks, warehouses and latterly, railway termini. John Liddell, the Medical Officer of Health for Whitechapel reflected on the social cost of docks and railways.

> 'In 1821 the population of the Whitechapel district was 68,905. At the last census in 1851, it was 79,759, although between the two peiods 1,743 houses have been pulled down in order to make room for various improvements.... During the ten years 1841 to 1851, the increase (of population) was about 800 annually. The increase in the population can only be accounted for by the fact of the labouring class (about 14,000 of whom have been displaced by carrying out the above mentioned improvements) crowding themselves into those houses which were

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13. A.S. Wohl: 'The Housing of the Working Classes in London 1815-1914' in ed. Stanley D. Chapman The History of Working Class Housing (1971)

14. R. Price - Williams: op.cit. pp400-401

formerly occupied by respectable tradesmen and mechanics, and which are now let out into tenements!' (15)

Where this kind of thing occurred, the sub-divisions of space were usually followed by a rapid deterioration in living conditions in a whole area. Where possible the skilled tried to avoid engulfment by the general delapidation of a whole area. When work was regular and relatively well paid, the renting of furnished rooms was an accepted minimum standard. Mayhew has shown how the worst conditions accomodated the lowest and most irregularly paid and how living space increased in proportion to wages and employment.(16) In those trades where skill could be diluted, i the skilled man felt himself to be threatened by the deterioration of his conditions into slum conditions..(17)

The skilled man's anxieties about casuality and the slums was obviously rooted in the fact that he was not residentially separated from them. Mayhew's reference to two worlds recognises two distinct moral worlds; it is not limited to the distinctions to be drawn between the East End and West End. Despite his acknowledged superiority within the working class, the skilled man generally lived in crowded communities, dependent as he was on central London for work. The more

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15. Quoted in William Denton: Observations on the Displacement of the Poor by Metropolitan Railways and other Public Improvements (1961) p.6, cit. in G. Stedman-Jones op.cit. p.164

16. Mayhew's Letters comparing the domestic conditions of "honourable" and "dishonourable" workers in the tailoring and cabinet making trades reflect this. Letter XVII and Letter LXIII.

17. Place had considered that living and working in the same room was an impediment to respectable living. Predictably he affirmed the 'moral consequences' of a 'neat clean room'. Add.MSS. 35.142 f.7.

crowded they became as a result of population increase the greater the sense of disassociation and isolation. Where the families of the skilled and respectable lived in close proximity to "the rough", the proximity was not likely to have been welcomed by either. When there was movement to another district it was most likely a neighbouring district, because of the constraints set by the location of work. The skilled and respectable worker was clearly in a position to be directly acquainted with the sub-culture of the slums, unlike the middle class whose massive exodus from the central districts of London resulted from their being the chief beneficiaries from the economic process that produced such environments.(18)

Mayhew's revelations about the poor have an obvious kinship with Oscar Lewis' idea of a culture of poverty that is transmitted from one generation to the next. Though referring to Puerto Rico in the early 1960s, Lewis has suggested that this culture of poverty is typical of societies experiencing economic growth and institutional change, where a conflict arises between the dominant value system of those who are participating in and benefitting from a changing economic system and those who are largely excluded from it. As Mayhew saw the position of many skilled workers, they were threatened by the spread of sweating and casuality and, therefore, with exclusion from participating fully in the economic system. Lewis has defined the culture of poverty as:

> '...both an adaptation and a reaction of the poor to their marginal position in a class-stratified, highly individuated, capitalist society. It represents an effort to cope with feelings of hopelessness and despair which develop from the

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18. H.J. Dyos and D.A. Reader: 'Slums and Suburbs' in H.J. Dyos and Michael Wolf eds. The Victorian City - Images and Realities (1973) Vol 1

> realisation of the improbability of achieving success in terms of the values and goals of the larger society.' (19)

Mayhew had given an empirical dimension to this kind of conceptualisation over a century before. Both writers point to the lack of integration of the poor into any of the major institutions of society such as unions, to how a constant attention to short term considerations derives from low and irregular income, to how violence and a capacity for immediate gratification appear to have as their moral context a permanent sense of fatalism and resignation.

These were the dominant qualities when marginality was close at hand, which it most often was as the more vulnerable of the skilled knew only too well. They were at the centre of that culture conflict within the working class between respectables and roughs. As Mayhew had demonstrated so clearly, the forces that were at work in producing and affirming respectability were simultaneously at work in extending the opposite. This condition was, as Dyos has said of the slums, 'a reflex of the allocation of political power and economic resources in society at large.' (20)

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19. Oscar Lewis: La Vida (1967) p.xii

20. H.J. Dyos: 'The Slums of Victorian London' Victorian Studies Sept. 1967 p 27.

CONCLUSION

No special pleading is necessary in support of the view that the emergence of the modern type of organisation was a crucial factor in the central place occupied by respectability in working class culture. Those areas where factories had been well established before 1850 were well known for the relative restraint and orderliness of the people who worked in them. However, an interpretation of repectability as the moral expression of alienating factory work and its attendent organisations for social control, has a limited application before 1850. The work of Place and Mayhew has pointed to larger social processes that ensured that preoccupations with a moralised view of respectability became central to English culture as a whole and to working class culture in particular.

The moral ethos of respectability became as dominant and as culturally decisive as it did because it constituted the chief moral focus for the process of increasing social segregation that was integral to capitalist economic expansion. Its presence is clearly registered in the separation between "respectables" and "roughs". A moralised notion of respectability was actually energised by the conflict of values these labels signify. Though a morally puritanical code of respectability owed a great deal to the social organisation of the factory and modern industrial work discipline, these must be seen as only some of the pressures that were at work in the first half of the nineteenth century within working class culture. It was because the social processes generated by industrial capitalist expansion affected society as a whole, that Perkin has been able to speak so confidently of a change in manners and morals that transformed

"the English" and Thompson to speak of the tendency of 'the "average" English working man' to become more reserved. One of Place's most important emphases was focussed on the general nature of moral change and its relation to the generalised process of social segregation. He saw the change in the representative behaviour of the "average" artisan in this context. As he saw it, the cultural milieu of the eighteenth century was transformed because it became less socially various. Mayhew's juxtaposition of "Belgravia" and "Pestilentia" supports this general view and his observation of the skilled and unskilled living in different worlds is intended as an organising insight into social segregation within the working class.

Asa Briggs has mentioned how consciousness of a new social reality in this period was predicated by the replacement of social terminology of status by one of class. The language of "ranks", "orders" and "degrees" derived from a residual feudalism and was related to a set of responsibilities and obligations that evinced an idea of "connection".(1) The language of class was, by contrast, related to separation and conflict between classes. As Dyos and others have shown, the social topography of the nineteenth century city testifies to progressive social segregation.(2)

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1. A. Briggs, 'The Language of Class in Early Nineteenth Century England' A. Briggs and J. Saville (Eds) Essays in Labour History Vol 1 (1961) p.45.

2. In particular H.J. Dyos and D.A. Deeder 'Slums and Suburbs' in H.J. Dyos and M. Wolf The Victorian City (1973 Vol. 1

To its critics the new type of city was a very effective metaphor for the dominant structure of capitalist social relationships. It seemed as though the middle class wished to keep the working class out of sight, sound and smell. The process was not altogether a new one as the increasing quartering of London between its "fashionable" and "low" areas shows well before 1780.(3) It was, however, the intensification of this process that distinguished it during Place's lifetime. Fashionable patronage of sporting occasions and popular holidays declined and, with it, the social contact it had made possible. The social retreat of the gentry appeared to move in step with the upward movement in estate values. Despite this retreat, open patronage of popular rough sports was still part of recent memory in the provinces in 1850.(4) Social exclusion also defined relationships in the countryside, as the following recollection of Tysoe later in the nineteenth century makes clear:

> 'The men said Methodism had killed the sports, because the best sportsmen had been converted. But Jasper said it was due to a change in the church too; the clergy and gentlemen farmers had ceased to be spectators. Altogether, the matches had lost interest.'(5)

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3. G. Rude, Hanoverian London (1971)

4. The Birmingham correspondent for the Morning Chronicle survey of Labour and the Poor was told by a local informant that the aristocracy had frequently wagered forty or fifty guineas in a cock fight and "on grand occasions as much as 100 guineas, were staked upon the result of the fight.'
P.E. Razzell and R.W. Wainwright op.cit (1973) p.317

5. M.K. Ashby - Joseph Ashby of Tysoe (1961) p.36

The disintegration of these sporting occasions might well be counted as a significant benefit of industrialisation. It is, however, important to recognise that their demise or descent into clandestine associations was related to a shift in social relationships in society at large, rather than to specific legislative action. It would appear that puritan injunctions against rough sports became more effective in relation to the social isolation of the working class.

Whilst the shift in social relationships in the period from 1780 to 1850 is clearly related to what Dyos has called 'the allocation of power and resources', it is important to remember that the idea of respectability seems to have shifted its emphasis and to have become a focus for a moral response to society. Place's work has suggested how it was that a particularly moralised view of respectability took root within the artisan world, because it carried with it a democratising, ideological meaning. The political goal of an inclusive and responsible democracy was also a moral goal. Political and moral reform were made indistinguishable in an assertion of a confident, optimistic plebeian demand for revaluation according to its own lights.

By the middle of the nineteenth century the confidence and the optimism had waned considerably. By then it had been clear for more than two decades that the passing of the social fluency that marked the eighteenth and early nineteenth century artisan world was decisive. The pressures which made social movement more difficult played an important part in the skilled worker's more anxious preoccupations with respectability. E.P. Thompson has shown that it was no longer possible for many to have realistic expectations of making the transition

from journeyman to master, as men in the generation of Hardy and Place had been able to do.(6) Under a feeling of threat the skilled man became more exclusive in his social and working relationships.

The phenomenon of respectability can be seen as the expression of akstate of social isolation. By 1850 the skilled worker certainly felt more isolated than in the first decade or two of the century. His perception of himself at the apex of the working class indicates a sense of relationship only with his social peers. His social inferiors are regarded as moral inferiors. This position of increasing isolation arose out of concern to neutralise, as far as possible, the devastating impact of market forces upon his status. He can be seen as attempting to "rationalise" his life in a way that the "average" artisans of Place's youth clearly did not. The emphasis on greater privacy and home centred consumption was a reflection of this. Home-centred consumption appears to have had a moral significance, in that it provided visible evidence of an ability to resist engulfment and to maintain status. This is more or less how Roberts described the dominant view of domestic possessions in Salford in the early part of the twentieth century. This anxiety might be considered as a possible moral or "taste" factor which contributed to the growth in demand for domestic goods.

The structure of the London trade societies reflected the structure of small scale capital. They were horizontally structured and concerned to work with a membership that, as Mayhew kept repeating, represented a minority of the labour market. They had two important

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6. E.P. Thompson op.cit. (1968) p.289

effects. Firstly they helped to ensure that any kind of mixing with social inferiors was strictly limited. Secondly they helped to ensure that class and status differences were given what amounted to a moral significance. The force of moral evaluation was registered by Place when he spoke of the "informed" and the "ignorant".

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of the unskilled and the casual, around whom the London slums grew so rapidly, in constituting a reactive and defensive focus for the respectable. What was devastatingly clear was the fact that casual labour was functional to a large part of the economic system. It is worth noting that the demands of the unskilled unions growing up from the 1870s were largely focussed on decasualisation and the regularisation of work. It was all too obvious that there would be no "improvement" in the unskilled man's economic and political position while, as G. Stedman-Jones has pointed out, 'employers gained only the most marginal advantages from regularity, reliability, sobriety, or other virtues of work discipline considered to be associated with regular employment.'(7) Regular work was regarded as an essential component of moral change.

It seems to be quite clear that the most important dimension of respectability stems from its root in social and psychological defensiveness. The large impersonal and irrational factors like competition and population growth were registered in the massive market disturbances that changed the context of the skilled worker's life. The rationality of trade and political societies that Place saw

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7. G. Stedman-Jones op.cit. p. 56.

extending to the life styles of the artisans is countered by the chaotic forces which Mayhew saw in capitalist economic relationships. Both were obviously at work in the deepening of anxieties and the growing sense of isolation which by 1850 had combined to limit the political goals of an assertive, optimistic, but past tradition of Radicalism. This sense of isolation was very familiar to Mayhew who captured it so well in the example of the fancy cabinet-maker who had said to him:

> 'Politics sir, whats politics to me compared with getting my dinner and whats getting my dinner, compared to getting foor for my children?' (8)

The notion that a man's first duty was to his family was axiomatic for generations of people. Political activity was identified defensively with "agitation" which lead to the slums. It was an anxiety rooted in the accumulated experience of working class people, that interpreted political activity with economic and moral retribution. For the respectable working man fighting to keep out of the slums, they represented a moral threat that was quite indistinguishable from the threat of engulfment into economic hopelessness.

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8. Labour and the Poor, Metropolitan Letter LXIV

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